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CRITICAL ESSAYS

ON SOME OF THE

POEMS,

OF SEVERAL

ENGLISH POETS:

BY

JOHN SCOTT, Esq.

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF THE AUTHOR;

BY Mr. HOOLE.

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AN

ACCOUNT

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

JOHN SCOTT, Eſq.

By Mr. HOOLE.

BEFORE I enter upon an account of the worthy and ingenious author of the following Eſſays, the reader will permit me to expreſs the moſt ſenſible regret, that the friends of Mr. Scott are diſappointed in the hope of ſeeing juſtice done to his memory, by the ſame maſterly pen, that has lately enriched our national ſtock of criticiſm and biography.

After Mr. Scott's deceaſe, the preſent volume being nearly ready for publication, it was thought adviſable to prefix ſome narrative of the author, which, as it would be highly acceptable to his friends in particular, might not be altogether unwelcome to the public in general, who, it has been often obſerved, will always take an intereſt in thoſe perſons, from whoſe labours they have derived profit or delight.

Mr. David Barclay,* from his acquaintance with the late Dr. Johnſon, thinking with equal truth and kindneſs, that he might be able to pay a moſt eſſential mark of attention to the name of Mr. Scott, reſolved to apply to the Doctor to become his biographer. Dr. Johnſon was then at Aſhbourn, in Derbyſhire, to which place he was gone for the benefit of his health, which had been, for ſome time, in a very declining ſtate.

* Grandſon of the great Apologiſt.

Mr.

Mr. Barclay, by letter, ſignified to him, that knowing he reſpected our late friend, and judging that ſome anecdotes of ſo deſerving a character ought to be handed down to poſterity, he wiſhed that an account, after the manner of the lives of the poets, might be prefixed to a poſthumous volume then in the preſs, entitled Critical Eſſays; and that if the Doctor would undertake the arrangement, he would endeavour to furniſh materials. To this application the Doctor, ever ready to pay attention to the calls of friendſhip, returned the following anſwer.

"SIR,

"As I have made ſome advances to-
"wards recovery, and loved Mr. Scott,
"I am willing to do juſtice to his me-
"mory. You will be pleaſed to get
"what account you can of his life, with
"dates, where they can be had, and

" when I return, we will contrive how
" our materials can be beſt employed."

" I am,

" SIR,

" Your moſt humble ſervant,

" SAMUEL JOHNSON."

Aſhbourn,
Sept. 16th, 1784.

In November following the Doctor came to town, when Mr. Barclay waited on him with the Critical Eſſays, and ſome anecdotes. He found that excellent man in his chamber, much indiſpoſed; and indeed, by this time, the fears of his friends began to be very general, and their diſtreſs to increaſe almoſt daily, at the nearer proſpect of ſuch an irreparable loſs. Mr. Barclay entered into a converſation with the Doctor, on the ſubject of the account to be given of Mr. Scott, and produced ſome materials

rials which had been collected by ſeveral of his friends. He then ſpoke of the volume of Eſſays, to which it was deſigned to prefix the account, but expreſſed ſome doubts reſpecting the propriety and delicacy of his application to Dr. Johnſon to write a life and criticiſm to be placed before the Eſſays of an author, who had, he obſerved, in thoſe very Eſſays, controverted the Doctor's opinion in ſeveral inſtances; and he went ſo far as to ſay, that had he before peruſed his friend's work, he believed he ſhould not have ventured to ſolicit the Doctor on the occaſion: he added, that he thought it might be as well to relinquiſh the deſign of publiſhing the book, as the writer was not living to defend his own criticiſms. Upon this the Doctor deſired that ſome of the paſſages alluded to might be pointed out to him, which deſire Mr. Barclay immediately complied with, and read a few pages, chuſing thoſe parts wherein Mr. Scott had diſ-

ſented from Dr. Johnſon. When Mr. Barclay had done reading, the Doctor delivered himſelf nearly to this effect: "That he differed from Mr. Barclay "reſpecting the publication, as from "what he had then heard, he believ- "ed the book would do credit to "their late friend, and as to Mr. Scott's "diſſenting from him, he obſerved, that "authors would differ in opinion, and "that good performances could not be "too much criticiſed." Mr. Barclay read to him ſome of the materials that had been collected, which the Doctor ſaid would do, ſo far as they went, but wiſhed that more could be procured, expreſſing an anxiety to begin the work. Mr. Barclay then took his leave, pleaſed with the reception from the Doctor, and filled with admiration at the candour and liberality of his ſentiments, expreſſed with the utmoſt benevolence and friendſhip, while labouring under the preſſure of pain and diſeaſe.

When

When Mr. Barclay left the Doctor, it was agreed that he ſhould call on him again; but when he returned to London, he learned from his faithful black ſervant, Francis Barber, that the Doctor's diſorder was too much increaſed for him to admit company. From that time he ſaw him no more; but the Doctor, a few days before his deceaſe, ſent, by a gentleman who paid him a viſit, a meſſage to Mr. Barclay, to inform him "that he had not forgot his engage-"ment; and that, if it ſhould pleaſe "God to reſtore him, he would cer-"tainly perform it, for he loved Mr. "Scott."

The death of this great and good man, which happened in the evening of the 13th of December, having fruſtrated the kind intentions of Mr. Barclay, and put an end to his flattering expectations of procuring ſo honourable a teſtimony to the merits of our deceaſed friend; he

was pleaſed to expreſs ſome deſire that I would take upon myſelf the taſk, which from my great friendſhip for, and knowledge of the deceaſed, I have been induced to attempt; though I hope the reader will believe, that it is with becoming diffidence I now ſtep forth, to ſupply the place of ſuch a biographer.

❀❀❀

JOHN SCOTT was born on the 9th of January 1730, of Samuel and Martha Scott, in the Grange-Walk, in the Pariſh of St. Mary Bermondſey, Southwark, being the youngeſt of two ſons, their only children that lived to be brought up, the reſt dying very ſoon: his elder brother was named Samuel, and his mother's maiden name was Wilkins. He was deſcended from two ancient and reſpectable families of the counties of York and Warwick. His father was a draper and citizen of London, a man of plain and irreproachable manners, and one of the

the ſociety of the people called Quakers, among whom he was eſteemed an eminent preacher.

Samuel Scott, the elder brother, lived for ſome time with an aunt in the neighbourhood, where he received the firſt rudiments of his education. John, at about ſeven years of age, was put under the tuition of one John Clarke, who kept a little ſchool in Barnaby-Street: he is ſaid to have been well ſkilled in the languages, and uſed to come home to the houſe of Mr. Scott, to inſtruct his ſon in the rudiments of the Latin tongue. John Scott himſelf gives the following account of his tutor. "My Caledonian tutor's name was John "Clarke; he was, I believe, a native of "the Shetland-Iſlands; he was ingenious and learned, but rather a ſevere "pedagogue; yet, ſpite of the domination which he exerciſed over his "pupils, I reſpected him, and there was "ſomething

" ſomething in the man, and in his " manner, that I even now faintly re- " collect with pleaſure."

But whatever might be the ſcholaſtic abilities of this man, he ſeems to have lived in a ſtate of great penury and obſcurity, and probably would not have been long remembered, but from the circumſtance of his having preſided over the firſt leſſons of young Scott, who does not however appear to have given any early promiſes of genius or ability; nor are we told what progreſs he made under the inſtructions of his tutor, who attended him for three years.

In the year 1740, John being then only ten years of age, his father withdrew himſelf wholly from buſineſs in town, and retired with his family, Mrs. Scott, and his two ſons, into the country, where he ſettled at a village called Amwell, in Hertfordſhire, and for ſome time carried on the malting trade. Thus was

was our young ſtudent deprived of the benefit that might have ariſen to him, from the attention of ſo able a maſter as Clarke, who continued to teach ſchool in the ſame place till death carried him off, probably as little known as he had lived.

The family being now ſettled at Amwell, Mr. Scott ſent his ſon to a private day ſchool, kept in the neighbourhood at Ware, the maſter of which was named Hall, who is ſaid to have been an admirable penman, but does not appear to have poſſeſſed any knowledge of language, or to have afforded in his ſchool any opportunities for claſſical improvement. John Scott continued with him but a ſhort time, for he and his father not having had the ſmall-pox, the ſon was frequently kept at home, through fear of that diſtemper, and never perſiſted in any regular ſyſtem of education.

He

He is ſaid to have applied himſelf to reading about the age of ſeventeen, when he gave evident ſigns of a propenſity to the ſtudy of poetry, in which he was greatly encouraged from an acquaintance which he had contracted, ſince his reſidence in the country, with Charles Frogley. This extraordinary perſon, who is now living at Amwell, and deſerves particular notice, was by trade a bricklayer, a perſon of ſtrong parts, but without education, who had, at his leiſure hours, by a diligent and ſolitary peruſal of ſuch books as came within his reach, greatly improved his natural taſte for metrical compoſition. His occupation in life introduced him firſt into the houſe of Mr. Scott, where he obſerved ſome little poetical eſſays of the ſon. A ſimilarity of diſpoſition ſoon brought on an intimacy between them, and Frogley gave his young friend the firſt perception of good poetry, by puting into his hands the Paradiſe Loſt of Milton.

Milton. Their acquaintance ſeems to have commenced about the year 1747, or 1748.

Mr. Scott, the father, lived in a very retired manner, and had little intercourſe with any but with thoſe of his own perſuaſion, who, though not without frequent inſtances of great ingenuity and ability among individuals, are not often much connected with the literary part of mankind: the neighbourhood of Amwell afforded little of ſuch ſociety, and Samuel Scott, the elder brother, though a young man of excellent ſenſe, and by no means unacquainted with books, having contributed not a little to lead John to the love of reading, had no peculiar predilection for that branch of ſtudy, which ſoon became the favourite object of his brother's purſuit. The converſations and reflections of our author on this ſubject, muſt have been therefore chiefly, if not wholly, confined to his commu-

communications with Frogley, whoſe critical diſcernment has been often mentioned to the writer of this account, by Scott, who declared, "that he ſeldom "found reaſon, in his advancing ſtate "of judgment, to diſſent from the opi-"nion of his friend Frogley."

The inclination of John Scott for writing verſe now increaſing, he produced at times ſeveral detached pieces; and as he was not brought up to any profeſſional employ, he had full time to indulge the bent of his genius. Beſides the advantage of ſo ſincere an adviſer as Frogley, he had formed an acquaintance with Mr. John Turner, who reſided at Ware, with whom he appears to have ſpent part of his early life.

——Thee, my Turner, who in vacant youth
Here oft in converſe free.——

AMWELL, Poetical Works, page 73.

This

This gentleman was born at Hertford, in the year 1734, and was removed to Ware at about three years old, where he received the rudiments of his education. He ſeems firſt to have been introduced to Scott by Frogley, in 1753 or 1754. At about ſixteen years of age, he was ſent to London to continue his ſtudies, at a diſſenting academy, under the care of Dr. Jennings. In one of his letters to Scott, he regrets their late acquaintance, by which he loſt ſo much time, which might have been ſpent in the company of one, who had improved his mind by reading and reflection; a companion that he had long ſought for in vain at Ware.

Turner, however, made occaſional viſits to his friends at Ware, and neglected no opportunity of improving his intimacy with Scott. He paſſed many hours with him and Frogley; and during

ing his abſence continued to correſpond with him by letter. He ſupplied his friend with books from time to time, among which are particularly mentioned, Glover's Leonidas, Thomſon's Seaſons, and Pope's original works and tranſlations. He likewiſe ſent him a teleſcope, with directions to uſe it; for the curioſity and deſire of knowledge in Scott now grew every day more general.

It has been aſſerted by ſome, that his early poetical eſſays were made in conſequence of a tender paſſion, and that love firſt taught him to cultivate the muſes; which opinion may not only have ſome countenance from the ſmaller poems at the end of his poetical volume, but may be further ſtrengthened from the correſpondence between him and his friend Turner, during the reſidence of the latter in London and Devonſhire.

In

In the company of Frogley, who was accuſtomed to viſit him when the buſineſs of the day was over, Scott paſſed moſt of his evenings; and to him, from time to time, he imparted the occaſional ſallies of his genius, receiving from him ſuch advice as tended greatly to ripen his judgment, and improve his powers that were now gradually expanding. He likewiſe communicated his performances to his friend Turner, then at London: but he was always diſſuaded from too early publication, and indeed his own good ſenſe, and cautious diſpoſition, preſerved him from that rock on which others have ſplit—the eager deſire of attracting publick notice; a natural paſſion indeed, but, by indulging which, many have precluded themſelves from that reputation which they might otherwiſe have obtained.

In the year 1754 his elder brother Samuel, who till then had made one of

the family at Amwell, was married, and went to ſettle at Hertford, in which town he now reſides, beloved and eſteemed by all for his manly ſenſe, unbiaſſed integrity, and univerſal philanthropy; and I cannot diſmiſs the character of Mr. Samuel Scott without paying this tribute of regard to the worthy brother of my deceaſed friend.

The firſt poetical eſſays of John Scott were given in the Gentleman's Magazine, at that time the great receptacle for the ebullitions of youthful genius; but it has not been in my power to diſcover all the pieces inſerted by him in that periodical work; his firſt inſertion however is ſaid to have been in December 1753, as follows.

Mr. URBAN,

" Mr. URBAN,

Accidentally looking over your magazines for July and Auguſt 1752, I was agreeably entertained with a critical diſſertation on that beautiful deſcription in the 12th chapter of Eccleſiaſtes. I thought your correſpondent's explication was juſt, and having a mind to ſee how the paſſage would look in a modern poetical dreſs, I attempted the following verſion of it, on his plan; to which if you pleaſe to allow a place in your next magazine, you will extremely oblige,

Your friend and

conſtant reader,

Hertfordſhire, Dec. 18, 1753.

R. S."

EPIDEMIC MORTALITY, from Eccl. xii.

To move unthinking youth to juſt regard,
On Judah's plains thus ſung the royal bard.
Thy Maker God in early time revere!
Ere evil days, thoſe dreadful days, draw near,
When health ſhall fly, and pleaſure leave the plain,
And woe and languor and diſtreſs remain;
When ſtars, nor moon, nor ſun, ſhall cheer the ſkies;
On earth, when Peſtilence enrag'd ſhall riſe;
The rain ſcarce paſt, when threatenin g clouds return,
And ſickly miſts aſcend, and ſouth winds burn;
When the bold guarders of the houſe ſhall ſhake,
And, pain'd, their ſtation at the door forſake;
When the fierce heroes, dreadleſs in the field,
Bow with diſeaſe, and ſlowly drooping yield;
When, freed from labour, captives idle lye,
Nor, tho' their number's leſſen'd, find employ;
When the proud daughters, of their beauty vain,
Griev'd for their friends, or for themſelves in pain,
At the high windows ſpread their charms no more,
But all ſequeſter'd in the dark deplore;
When barr'd the gates, and clos'd the doors appear,
And ſcarce of grinding the faint ſounds they hear;
Long ere the dawn, when early mourners riſe,
The ſolemn rites of grief to exerciſe.
Nor ſongs are heard, nor mirthful minſtrels meet;
Death's in the houſe, and Silence in the ſtreet!
When e'en high places ſhall be ſeats of fear;
Still in the way when danger ſhall be near;

When

When the thick, ſultry, foul, and ſtagnant air
Unſeen infection ſcatters every where;
When the ripe almond ſhall be pluck'd no more,
Deſpis'd untaſted all its luſcious ſtore!
Wide o'er the land when locuſts ſhall be ſpread,
Dead all the crowds that on their numbers fed:
When faireſt objects fail to move deſire,
Of youth extinguiſh'd all the ſprightly fire:
Becauſe the time of deſolation's come,
And man ſwift paſſes to his final home;
And penſive mourners range about the ſtreet,
And rend their garments, and their boſoms beat.

He likewiſe availed himſelf of the ſame channel for printing his verſes in the two following inſtances, which are all that can be traced with certainty.

VERSES occaſioned by the DESCRIPTION of the ÆOLIAN HARP, in February Magazine, 1754.

Untaught o'er ſtrings to draw the roſin'd bow,
Or melting ſtrains on the ſoft flute to blow,
With others long I mourn'd the want of ſkill
Reſounding roofs with harmony to fill.
Till happy now th' Æolian lyre is known,
And all the powers of muſic are my own.
Swell all thy notes, delightful harp, O! ſwell!
Inflame thy poet to deſcribe thee well,

When the full chorus riſes with the breeze,
Or, ſlowly ſinking, leſſens by degrees,
To ſounds more ſoft than amorous gales diſcloſe,
At evening panting on the bluſhing roſe;
More ſweet than all the notes that organs breathe,
Or tuneful echoes, when they die, bequeathe;
Oft where ſome Sylvan temple decks the grove,
The ſlave of eaſy indolence I rove;
There the wing'd breeze the lifted laſh pervades,
Each breath is muſic, vocal all the ſhades.
Charm'd with the ſoothing ſound, at eaſe reclin'd,
To fancy's pleaſing power I yield my mind:
And now enchanted ſcenes around me riſe,
And ſome kind Ariel the ſoft air ſupplies:
Now lofty Pindus through the ſhades I view,
Where all the Nine their tuneful art purſue:
To me the ſound the panting gale conveys,
And all my heart is extaſy and praiſe.
Now to Arcadian plains at once convey'd,
Some ſhepherd's pipe delights his favourite maid;
Mix'd with the murmurs of a neighbouring ſtream,
I hear ſoft notes that ſuit an amorous theme!
Ah! then a victim to the fond deceit,
My heart begins with fierce deſires to beat;
To fancy'd ſighs I real ſighs return,
By turns I languiſh, and by turns I burn.
Ah! Delia, haſte! and here attentive prove,
Like me that, "muſic is the voice of love:"
So ſhall I mourn my ruſtic ſtrains no more,
While pleas'd you liſten, who could frown before.

Hertfordſhire, Nov. 15, 1754. R. S.

Gentle-

Gentleman's Magazine, July, 1758.

To FEAR.

O thou! dread foe of honour, wealth, and fame,
Whoſe touch can quell the ſtrong, the fierce can tame,
Relentleſs Fear! ah! why did fate ordain
My trembling heart to own thy iron reign?
There are, thrice happy, who diſdain thy ſway:
The merchant wand'ring o'er the watry way;
The chief ſerene before th' aſſaulted wall;
The climbing ſtateſman thoughtleſs of his fall;
All whom the love of wealth or power inſpires,
And all who burn with proud ambition's fires:
But peaceful bards thy conſtant preſence know,
O thou! of every glorious deed the foe!
Of thee the ſilent ſtudious race complains,
And learning groans a captive in thy chains.
The ſecret wiſh when ſome fair object moves,
And cautious reaſon what we wiſh approves,
Thy Gorgon front forbids to graſp the prize,
And ſeas are ſpread between, and mountains riſe!
Thy magic arts a thouſand phantoms raiſe,
And fancy'd deaths and dangers fill our ways:
With ſmiling hope you wage eternal ſtrife,
And envious ſnatch the cup of joy from life.
O leave, tremendous power! the blameleſs breaſt,
Of guilt alone, the tyrant, and the gueſt.
Go, and thy train of fable horrors ſpread,
Where Murder meditates the future dead;

Where Rapine watches for the gloom of night,
And lawleſs paſſion pants for other's right;
Go, to the bad—but from the good recede,
No more the foe of every glorious deed!

The laſt two copies of verſes, which are ſuperior to the firſt, are ſpirited and poetical: it is obſervable, that with the two firſt he has uſed the ſignature, R. S.

Beſides the laſt verſes on Fear, Scott wrote an ode on the ſame ſubject about the year 1755, which he ſent for the inſpection of his friend Turner; it appears, likewiſe, that he wrote ſeveral paſtorals about the ſame time, for Turner, in his letter of January 1755, ſpeaks of two lines in his ſixth paſtoral, which he prefers to two of Pope; but it cannot be known if any, or what uſe was made of theſe in his laſt publications.

In the year 1757, Turner, who had been for ſome time preparing for the miniſtry, left Dr. Jennings on account of

of ſome difference of opinion in matters of religion, and removed to Taunton in Somerſetſhire, where he finiſhed his ſtudies, and where he ſeems firſt to have officiated as a diſſenting miniſter. About the year 1758, he went to ſettle at Lympſtone in Devonſhire, and about the year 1762, he engaged with the Rev. Mr. Hogg and another gentleman, as tutors and managers of an academy at Exeter; but he continued ſtill to correſpond with Scott, and in the time of vacation paid ſeveral viſits to Ware. He is ſuppoſed to be the perſon to whom the verſes, intitled TO AN ABSENT FRIEND are addreſſed.

While thou far hence on Albion's ſouthern ſhore,
View'ſt her white rocks, and hear'ſt her ocean roar;
Thro' ſcenes, where we together ſtray'd, I ſtray,
And think o'er talk of many a long-paſt day.

Our author alſo addreſſed to him, WINTER PROSPECTS IN THE COUNTRY, an epiſtle, which was intended for the Gentleman's Magazine, but appeared

peared in a miſcellany of poems, publiſhed by G. Pearch, 1770.

About this time Scott ſeems to have entirely renounced all communication with Mr. Urban, having turned his deſigns on a direct application to the public attention, in his poetical production, entitled ELEGIES DESCRIPTIVE AND MORAL, which he was now preparing for the preſs.

While he thus purſued his poetical ſtudies, it may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, from the general knowledge in, and acquaintance with books, which he certainly poſſeſſed, that he miſſed no opportunity, and ſpared no pains or application, for his improvement in the acquirements requiſite for one who was ambitious of holding a place in the republic of literature. That he made any great progreſs in the languages there is little reaſon to ſuppoſe: he indeed might

might attain ſome knowledge of the Latin, but that knowledge was probably very ſlender. From his inclination to know ſomething of the excellencies of thoſe poets, who have ſo long held their claim to admiration, he ſeems, by a few remarks and references, to have looked into ſome of the Auguſtan writers, particularly Virgil, whoſe ſpirit would have been highly congenial to one whoſe profeſſed aim was purity and correctneſs: but I think there is little room to believe that thoſe occaſional reſearches were ever improved into any thing like the familiar peruſal of a Latin claſſic. He had no acquaintance with the French or Italian.

For about twenty years after the removal of the family to Amwell, John Scott appears to have led a very retired life: for, having never had the ſmall pox, as has been before mentioned, his father and mother were very apprehenſive of the danger that might be incurred from

from his excurſions to the metropolis, which, however extraordinary it may appear, though only at the diſtance of twenty miles, he is ſaid to have viſited but once during ſo long a period. The hours in which he was not engaged in his cloſet in ſedentary occupation, he uſed to employ in gardening, to which he had for ſome time taken a particular liking.

Though he very early acquired the friendſhip and eſteem of a large circle of acquaintance, yet he does not appear to have been known to any literary characters till the year 1760; after which time he began to make occaſional, though cautious and ſhort viſits to London.

In the ſpring of the year 1765, being then thirty years of age, after many repeated reviſals and corrections, he publiſhed his Four Elegies, which were extremely well ſpoken of by the public critics

of partiality to friendſhip; but the ſanetion of learning, taſte, and genius, given to modeſt and retired merit.

Had theſe Elegies appeared with the name of ſome popular writer, the ſale would probably have been proportionably rapid, and the reputation of a Pope, a Goldſmith, or a Gray, would have prepared the reader to receive the impreſſion of their beauties. Perhaps it muſt be granted that this firſt avowed production of Mr. Scott has not been excelled by any of his ſubſequent works, whether we conſider the livelineſs of the painting, the harmony of the verſe, or the amiable ſtrain of benevolence and piety that runs through the whole.

Our author's acquaintance was now conſiderably enlarged, he was introduced to ſeveral of the literati, with whom he had little or no connection before the appearance of his Elegies. But the praiſe which

which accrued to him, upon this occaſion, did not in the leaſt excite his vanity to claim again the attention of the public. He wrote little, and printed nothing till the year 1769. His natural caution and diffidence ſeemed to increaſe: he always expreſſed the ſtrongeſt ſenſe of the neceſſity of frequent reviſal before publication; and no writer ever adhered more ſtrictly than himſelf to the well-known precept of Horace,—*Nonum prematur in annum.*

In 1761, the ſmall pox being prevalent in the town of Ware, and he being very fearful of that diſtemper, removed, for ſome time, to St. Margarets, a ſmall hamlet, at the diſtance of about two miles from Amwell, where I was introduced to his acquaintance by Mr. Bennet, my once worthy and reſpected tutor, then maſter of the grammar ſchool at Hoddeſdon, where we accidentally met. I ſhall always recollect, with pleaſure, my firſt

conver-

converſation with Mr. Scott, at St. Margaret's, where he ſhewed me the early ſketch of his Poem of Amwell, which he then called, A PROSPECT OF WARE AND THE COUNTRY ADJACENT. It does not appear how long this had been written, but it is certain that he had, for ſome years before, formed a deſign of writing on the ſubject, for his friend Turner, in a letter to him, dated December 1755, tells him, that "he hopes, "when he comes next to Ware, he ſhall "have the pleaſure of ſeeing the ſcenes "which had ſo often entertained him, "deſcribed in verſe, that would never "decay." This ſketch was afterwards greatly enlarged and improved before its appearance in the year 1776; and, in the courſe of our future converſations, he ſhewed me ſeveral manuſcript pieces, ſome of which were made part of his poetical volume.

John Scott was not only a lover and cultivator of polite literature, but, though not bred to any profeſſion, was no idle member of the community; he buſied himſelf in many concerns that tended to the good of his neighbourhood: he knew how to blend the elegant with the uſeful; and ſuch as had little predilection for the author of the Elegies, were forward enough to give their ſuffrages to thoſe merits that promoted the good of general life. In a letter from him to a friend, in the year 1764, in anſwer to an inquiry why no more of his compoſitions had appeared in print, he ſays, that "a variety of avocations, "very different from literary, had ſo "engaged his attention, that he had "ſcarcely time to put pen to paper, but "upon occaſions that could not be diſ-"penſed with."

Having found the frequent diſadvantages and inconveniences ariſing from his

his apprehenſion of the ſmall pox, which prevented him from mixing frequently with the world, and improving that acquaintance in London, of which his increaſing reputation and love of knowledge made him now more deſirous, he reſolved at once to remove every fear of that diſtemper, by ſubmitting to the operation of inoculation, which he accordingly did under the care of Baron Dimſdale, in the year 1766, with Mr. Joſeph Cockfield, a gentleman with whom he had lived for ſome years in great intimacy, and to whom he addreſſes his XIIth Ode. He writes to a friend, that, "they had not one day's confine-"ment, though ſufficient tokens to ſe-"cure them from future fear or danger."

About this time I had the ſatisfaction of introducing Mr. Scott to the acquaintance of my invaluable friend Dr. Johnſon, and notwithſtanding the great difference of their political principles,

Scott had too much love for goodneſs and genius, not to be highly gratified in the opportunity of cultivating a friendſhip with that great exemplar of human virtues, and that great veteran of human learning; while the Doctor, with a mind ſuperior to the diſtinction of party, delighted with equal complacency in the amiable qualities of Scott, of whom he always ſpoke with feeling regard.

It has been already obſerved, that Scott ſeems very early to have had a paſſion for gardening: he had, for ſeveral years, particularly in the years 1765 and 1766, amuſed himſelf in laying out and embelliſhing with plantations a few acres of his own ground, and which, though at preſent nearly in the ſame ſtate in which they were before he had ſeen any other improved ſpot, are thought not unworthy the attention of ſtrangers, who come accidentally into the neighbourhood. In theſe plantations is a grotto,

grotto, of his own deſign, conſidered as one of the curioſities of the country. It appears, by a letter from his friend Turner, at Exeter, that he had applied to him to procure foſſils and ſhells for the completion of this work, in which he frequently exerted his own manual labour; and he has told me, that in making the excavation under the hill, for the ſubterraneous paſſage, he marched firſt, like a pioneer, with his pick-ax in his hand, to encourage his ruſtic aſſiſtants.

Theſe pleaſure grounds have given riſe to an epiſtle, intitled THE GARDEN*. To this epiſtle is prefixed a very pleaſing engraving of a front view of the grotto. The following lines, where he introduces his friend, ſuppoſing he may be retired to it for ſhelter, give no unfavourable ſketch of the place.

* See Poetical Works, page 259.

Where, 'midſt thick oaks, the ſubterraneous way
To the arch'd grot admits a feeble ray;
Where glaſſy pebbles pave the varied floors,
And rough flint walls are deck'd with ſhells and ores;
And ſilvery pearls, ſpread o'er the roofs on high,
Glimmer like faint ſtars in a twilight ſky;
From noon's fierce glare, perhaps he pleas'd retires,
Indulging muſings which the place inſpires.

Our author is reported to have been, at one time, a ſportſman, but in conſequence of a humane and rational opinion, that men had no right to deſtroy or torment any of the animal creation for mere diverſion, he, for many years before his death, totally relinquiſhed the diverſions of ſhooting and fiſhing.

In the year 1766 he loſt his mother, who died on the 14th of December, aged eighty years. A Sonnet to her memory is ſaid to have been found among his manuſcripts.

In 1767 he was married to Sarah Frogley, the daughter of his friend Charles

Charles Frogley, of whom ſuch deſerved and honourable mention has been made. The bride was, previous to her nuptials, admitted a member of the ſociety to which he belonged, and the nuptials were celebrated at the Quakers meeting-houſe, at Cheſhunt in Hertfordſhire.

The connection between Scott and Frogley being ſtrengthened by this marriage, Scott ſhewed many acts of kindneſs to the companion of his early ſtudies, to whom he always continued firmly attached; of which attachment he has left a public teſtimony in his XIth Ode, addreſſed to a friend apprehenſive of declining friendſhip, which ſeems to have been written in order to diſſipate ſome little uneaſineſs that might have ariſen in the mind of Frogley, from a fear of being neglected by Scott.

Too much in man's imperfect ſtate,
Miſtake produces uſeleſs pain:
Methinks on Friendſhip's frequent fate,
I hear my Frogley's voice complain.

Deem not that time's oblivious hand
From memory's page has raz'd the days,
By Lee's green verge we wont to ſtand,
And on his cryſtal current gaze.

Our author was now to experience the moſt ſevere ſtroke he had ever met with: after having loſt his father, who died in February 1768, in the 84th year of his age, he was deprived of his wife, who died in child-bed, in the ſame year, leaving behind her a child of which ſhe had been delivered, that died the following Auguſt.

The reader will imagine what muſt have been the feelings of ſuch a mind as Scott's on the trying occaſion of ſuch complicated affliction. Till the death of his mother, his life ſeems to have run in one even tenor, calm and unruffled; but he was now called to an exertion of that philoſophy which made no inconſiderable part of his character. For ſome time after the death of his wife, he

he retired to the houſe of his friend Cockfield, at Upton, that, removed from thoſe ſcenes which perpetually awakened every tender idea, his mind might, by degrees, recover its tranquillity: of this circumſtance he ſpeaks in his Ode addreſſed to that gentleman.

'Twas when Misfortune's ſtroke ſevere,
And Melancholy's preſence drear,
Had made my Amwell's groves diſpleaſe,
That thine my weary ſteps receiv'd,
And much the change my mind reliev'd,
And much thy kindneſs gave me eaſe;
For o'er the paſt as thought would ſtray,
That thought thy voice has oft retriev'd,
To ſcenes that fair before us lay.
Ode XII. Poetical Works, page 198.

When the firſt violence of his grief began to ſettle into a ſedate and gentle ſorrow, he ſolaced his lonely hours by compoſing an Elegy to the memory of one who had been ſo dear to him; and perhaps the genuine ſtate of his mind cannot be ſo well painted as in that pathetic

In 1769 Mr. Scott met with another loſs in the death of his friend Turner, the companion and aſſociate of his early ſtudies with Frogley. This ingenious man died, univerſally lamented, on the 30th of June, in the thirty-fifth year of his age, at Colliton, in Devonſhire, at which place he was buried.

He poſſeſſed conſiderable natural abilities, and much acquired knowledge, with a candid diſpoſition and elegant taſte; and by the general tenor of his correſpondence with Scott, appears to have been always a young man of a religious and ſtudious turn. A pathetic tribute is paid to his memory by our author, in his Poem of Amwell, ſpeaking of the ſeveral loſſes which he had experienced in the death of friends.

——————From general fate
To private woes then oft has memory paſs'd;

Of

Of thee, De Horne,* kind, generous, wiſe and good;
Of thee, my Turner, who, in vacant youth,
Here oft in converſe free, or ſtudious ſearch
Of claſſic lore, accompanied my walk!
From Ware's green bowers to Devon's myrtle vales
Remov'd awhile, with proſpect opening fair
Of uſeful life, and honour in his view;
As falls the vernal bloom before the breath
Of blaſting Eurus, immature he fell!
The tidings reach'd my ear, and in my breaſt
Aching with recent wounds,† new anguiſh wak'd.

On the 1ſt day of November, 1770, he was married at the meeting-houſe at Ratcliff, to his ſecond wife, Mary De Horne, daughter of the late Abraham De Horne, a lady whoſe amiable qualities promiſed him many years of uninterrupted happineſs.

* Mr. John De Horne, brother to Mrs. Scott, Mr. Scott's ſecond wife.

† See Elegy written at Amwell.

About

About the year 1771, he commenced an acquaintance with the ingenious Dr. Beattie, who paid him two viſits at his houſe at Amwell, one in 1773, and the other in 1781. Dr. Beattie has informed me, that their converſation was commonly on literary ſubjects, chiefly poetry and criticiſm, and that the letters which he occaſionally received from him, conſiſted for the moſt part of literary news. He laments his death as depriving him of a moſt valuable friend, whoſe memory he ſhall ever cheriſh with gratitude and veneration.

Mr. Scott's ſettled reſidence was at Amwell, in the ſame houſe where his father reſided when he firſt retired from London, and which the ſon afterwards greatly enlarged; but he every year ſpent ſome time occaſionally at a houſe which he had at Radcliff-Croſs.

By

By his viſits to London, the number of his literary friends had been conſiderably increaſed: he was introduced to the elegant Mrs. Montagu, at whoſe houſe, I believe, he became firſt acquainted with the pious and excellent Lord Lyttleton. He had been viſited at Amwell by the celebrated Mrs. Macaulay; he was known to Dr. Hawkeſworth, Sir William Jones, Mr. Boſwell, and to the Rev. Mr. Potter, and Mr. Mickle, the excellent tranſlators of Æchylus and Camöens.

In the year 1773, our author ſhewed the world, that his ſtudies were not confined to ornamental and elegant literature, but that many of his hours had been ſpent in ſuch uſeful inquiries as might tend to the general benefit of mankind. He publiſhed a pamphlet full of good ſenſe and philanthropy, entitled, OBSERVATIONS ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE PAROCHIAL AND VAGRANT POOR, in which the cauſe of that unhappy part of

of the community is pleaded with much perſpicacity and depth of obſervation, againſt oppreſſive or defective laws, and avaricious pariſh officers. This pamphlet, at the author's deſire, I gave to the late Dr. Johnſon, who highly commended the good ſenſe and benevolence of its principles; but rather objected to the ſtile, as being in a few inſtances ſomewhat inflated. In this tract the author, with great diffidence and candour, has propoſed a ſyſtem of regulations for the prevention of impoſition on the one hand, and of tyranny on the other. How far this ſyſtem might have been reduced to practice, is difficult to determine, as it will always be much eaſier to point out an evil, than to apply a remedy; but it ſhould be told, for the honour of Scott's Theory, that Mr. Gilbert, in a bill brought into the Houſe of Commons, in the year 1782, ſeems to have offered expedients in ſome caſes very ſimilar to thoſe propoſed by Scott.

In

In the courſe of this ſummer, 1773, I paid a family viſit at Amwell, in company with my late friend, Dr. Johnſon, and Mrs. Anne Williams, a lady with whoſe father the Doctor had formerly lived in great intimacy: ſhe had been many years deprived of her ſight, had long reſided with the Doctor, and was a woman of uncommon knowledge and goodneſs. The writer of this has frequently regretted in her the loſs of a moſt ſincere friend and zealous adviſer. She died in September, 1783, aged ſeventy-ſeven years.*

We ſtaid at Amwell ſome days, to the mutual ſatisfaction of the Doctor and Scott, whoſe kindneſs for each other was not a little ſtrengthened by this domeſtic intercourſe. Scott led Dr. Johnſon to take a view of his gardens, which were then completed, when the Doctor, with

* See Memoirs of Mrs. Anne Williams, in the London Magazine for December, 1783.

pleaſantry, termed the grotto FAIRY HALL, and ſaid with a ſmile, that "none "but a poet could have made ſuch a "garden."

But whatever might be the merit of theſe gardens, conſidered as planned by one who had never ſeen other improved grounds, it is very certain that the taſte of Scott, afterwards more cultivated, would not ſuffer him always to view them with the ſame complacency. In his laſt publication, he has with great preciſion and candour, delivered his ſentiments on the occaſion.

For me, my groves not oft my ſteps invite,
And far leſs apt they fail t'offend my ſight:
In vain the ſenna waves its gloſſy gold;
In vain the ciſtus ſpotted flowers unfold;
In vain th' acacia's ſnowy bloom depends;
In vain the ſumach's ſcarlet ſpike aſcends;
In vain the woodbines ſpicy tufts diſcloſe,
And green ſlopes redden with the ſhedding roſe:
Theſe neat ſhorn hawthorns uſeleſs verdant bound,
This long ſtrait walk, that pool's unmeaning round,

The

The ſhort curv'd paths, that twiſt beneath the trees,
Diſguſt the eye, and make the whole diſpleaſe.
The GARDEN.*

After ſo long an interval from the writing of his Elegy in 1768, Scott was now preparing, about the year 1774, his third avowed poetical production, in which he meant to celebrate the village of Amwell, the ſketch of which poem I had ſeen in the year 1761. The face of the country here is very pictureſque, but perhaps it will be found, that local deſcription, though it may afford room for ſtrong painting, apt alluſions, and fictitious or hiſtorical incidents, yet is far more adapted to the powers of the pencil than the pen. Thoſe marking and peculiar features which the painter gives with a few ſtrokes, to the eye, will loſe almoſt all their diſcrimination in the words of the poet: a hill, a vale, a foreſt, a rivulet, and a cataract, can be deſcribed only by

* See Poetical Works.

general terms: the hill muſt ſwell, the vale ſink, the foreſt extend its ſhade, the rivulet murmur, and the cataract foam; and hence it ariſes, that he who has peruſed one deſcriptive poem of this kind, is often ſtruck with a ſeeming repetition of ideas, and more ſenſibly ſo, where the places deſcribed have no previous ſeat in his own imagination. The poet, who deſcribes, or the reader, who peruſes deſcriptions of ſcenes familiar to him, will eaſily find the diſtinct images awakened by general terms; but he, who is to impreſs a local picture on his fancy, merely from the combination of words, will find little novelty in theſe reiterated deſcriptions of country proſpects, and will, probably, be frequently apt to exclaim, "All this I have read before." The Windſor Foreſt of Pope, with all its beauties, has ſo little excluſively adapted to the place it profeſſes to celebrate, that the far greater part may be equally deſcriptive of any ſcene of ruſtic imagery.

imagery. The deſcriptions of Thomſon ſeldom apply to any particular ſpot, but pleaſe by exhibiting the general views and effects of nature. Pope and Scott may likewiſe pleaſe, but they pleaſe on the ſame principles; though their poems are local, they ſeldom raiſe any ideas of locality.

On the great defect of words to diſcriminate material objects, Dr. Johnſon once obſerved to me, that no deſcription, however accurately given, could impreſs any determinate idea of the different ſhapes of animals on the mind of one, who had never ſeen thoſe animals. Hence it muſt be concluded, that the appearance of nature at large may be the province of poetry; but that the form of particular objects muſt belong to the painter.

Scott, however, ſtrongly impreſſed with the beauties of his favourite village,

had long determined to prove his powers in deſcriptive poetry. He greatly enlarged the firſt plan of his piece, and rendered it intereſting by the introduction of hiſtorical alluſions and moral reflections, with the addition of explanatory notes. He beſtowed much attention on this poem; the alterations and corrections were very frequent, and I have ſeveral letters, wherein he mentions the aſſiſtance which he received from two or three friends, particularly his friend Frogley.

In the year 1776, he publiſhed his performance, under the title of, AMWELL, A DESCRIPTIVE POEM, with his name. Its reception by the critics in general, and by poetical readers, was ſuch, as from its merit might be expected. The authors of the Monthly Review ſpeak of it in very high terms of approbation.

This poem is written in blank verſe, the genius of which Scott profeſſed to have

have particularly ſtudied, and I think he exhibits a ſpecimen of great ſtrength and harmony in that metre; but though the nature of the ſubject approaches nearly to that of Thomſon; and Scott was a great admirer of the author of the Seaſons, his ſtile is very different, being wholly free from that unnatural ſwell and pomp of words, which too often disfigure the beautiful deſcriptions of Thomſon. He has availed himſelf of every circumſtance that could with propriety be introduced to decorate his poem; but nothing ſhews his taſte and judgment more than the tribute paid by him to the memory of the venerable miniſter of Amwell, which furniſhes a paſſage at once ſo pathetic and poetical. Thomas Haſſal had been vicar of this place upwards of fifty-ſeven years, and Scott accompanies his eulogium with a note, that gives a curious account of this very intereſting character. Haſſal is ſaid to have left behind him a hiſtory in

manuſcript of his own times, which, from ſome extracts given of it in the account of Hertfordſhire, ſeems to have been very deſerving of publication.

Upon the whole, though Scott's poem will not raiſe in the mind of a ſtranger any ſtrong idea of the place meant to be deſcribed, yet it will always be peruſed with delight by poetical lovers of rural imagery, and muſt be peculiarly pleaſing to thoſe who are familiar with the ſcenes ſo elegantly painted.

He employed his pen at times in various anonymous pamphlets and eſſays, on miſcellaneous ſubjects, and particularly in vindication of ſuch political principles as he had invariably eſpouſed. Notwithſtanding his unfeigned veneration for the character of Dr. Johnſon, he publiſhed two pamphlets in anſwer to the Doctor's PATRIOT, and FALSE ALARM, and is ſaid to have prepared an anſwer to TAXATION NO TYRANNY. On theſe ſubjects

ſubjects the writings of Scott have much clearneſs of argument and ſtrength of ſtile; but he has ſometimes given way to acrimonious expreſſions, which I wiſh he had avoided.

When the publication of the poems, aſcribed to Rowley, had engaged very general attention among the literary inquirers into antiquity, Scott entered the liſt, and diſputed their authenticity in two judicious and well written letters, in the Gentleman's Magazine for July and Auguſt 1777, and is ſaid to have produced the firſt arguments on that ſide, except what are contained in a letter in the ſame Magazine for May, 1777.

Scott had not only employed his literary talents on other ſubjects than thoſe of polite compoſition, as has been ſhewn in his publication on the ſtate of the poor; but he dedicated great part of his time to public buſineſs, and was very conſtant

conſtant in his attendance at turnpike meetings, navigation truſts, and commiſſions of land-tax: he took the lead in ſeveral undertakings, in which his plans proved ſucceſsful. Ware and Hertford are indebted to him for opening a ſpacious road between thoſe towns, which was undertaken in the year 1768, and is juſtly eſteemed one of the greateſt conveniences in that part of the country; and by his attention and diligence, alterations have been made in the principal ſtreets of Ware, to the great improvement of that town.

As he was well informed in the laws of his country, he was ever diſpoſed to ſtand forward in the arbitration of any differences between his neighbours; he frequently interfered in the leſſer quarrels, and diſtreſſes of the poor inhabitants, and to apply his own emphatical words on the Vicar of Amwell,

——— oft heard, and oft reliev'd
Their little wants; oft heard and oft compos'd,
Sole arbiter, their little broils.——

The

The active and public ſpirit of Scott would not permit him to remain an unintereſted ſpectator, when any occaſion offered of ſhewing his exertions for what he deemed the good of the community. The calm and diſpaſſionate temper of the man of ſtudy and retirement was loſt in the ſeaſon of party and turbulence, when it may reaſonably be imputed as a crime, for any member of ſociety, to obſerve a frigid neutrality. The warmth of zeal for that cauſe, which he had eſpouſed upon generous and deliberate principles, might in ſome inſtances be thought to have carried him too far. But where in man ſhall we find perfection?

In January 1778, an anonymous attack was made upon Dr. Beattie, in the Gentleman's Magazine, for not continuing his "Inquiry concerning the Immuta-" bility of Moral Truth;" when Scott, with a friendly zeal, undertook his defence

fence in a letter in the ſame magazine, for March following, to which he ſigned his name, and received the Doctor's acknowledgments upon the occaſion.

In 1778 he favoured the public with a work of great labour and extenſive utility, entitled, A DIGEST OF THE HIGHWAY AND GENERAL TURNPIKE LAWS. In this compilation all the Acts of Parliament in force are collected together, and placed in one point of view; their contents are arranged under diſtinct heads, with the addition of many notes, and an appendix on the conſtruction and preſervation of public roads, probably the only ſcientific treatiſe on the ſubject.

Scott had frequently ſignified his intention of publiſhing a volume of poems, in which he meant to include what he had already given to the world, his FOUR ELEGIES, AMWELL, and the ELEGY written, but not publiſhed, in 1768. Amongſt the

the ſeveral pieces deſigned for this volume, were four moral eclogues, in which he profeſſed to have endeavoured to exhibit a ſpecimen of genuine and ſimple paſtoral. Theſe were firſt publiſhed ſeparately, without a name, in 1778: but it was now no time for paſtoral poetry to attract curioſity, when probably the merits of Theocritus and Virgil, infuſed into an Engliſh muſe, would have been little attended to. The Latin motto from Virgil, prefixed to theſe eclogues, was given him by Dr. Beattie, who, in one of his letters, ſpeaks highly of the eclogue, entitled, "ARMYN," which he appears to have ſeen in manuſcript, and expreſſes himſelf in the following words, relative to the variety of Scott's publications.

"I am aſtoniſhed, my dear Sir, at the activity of your mind, and the verſatility of your genius. It is truly amazing that one and the ſame perſon ſhould, in one and

and the ſame year, publiſh the moſt elegant poems, and, A DIGEST OF THE LAWS RELATING TO HIGHWAYS. Go on, Sir, in your laudable reſolution of delighting and inſtructing mankind; of patroniſing the poor; and promoting the publick weal."

Theſe Eclogues undoubtedly deſerve praiſe for eaſy verſification and good painting, and for ſeveral natural obſervations of the poet, among which may be given the following.

Thin miſts hung hovering o'er the diſtant trees,
Or roll'd from off the fields before the breeze.
Eclog. I.

Bright fleecy clouds flew ſcattering o'er the ſky.
Eclog. II.

Calm as clear evenings after vernal rains,
When all the air a rich perfume retains.

Several new images may be collected from theſe poems.

Sweet

Sweet as the nightingale's love ſoothing ſtrain,
Heard by ſtill waters on the moon-light plain.
Eclog. III.

Rich hills and vales, and pleaſant village ſcenes
Of oaks, whoſe wide arms ſtretch o'er daizied greens,
And wind-mill ſails ſlow circling in the breeze,
And cottage walls invelop'd half with trees.
Ibid.

Slow down the tide before the ſinking breeze,
Albino's white ſail gleam'd among the trees.
Ibid.

'Twas ſilence all—ſave where along the road,
The ſlow wain grating bore its cumb'rous load.
Eclog. IV.

In ſome places the poet has not unſkilfully introduced the names of wild plants and flowers, which, when they are marked with pictureſque epithets, have a good effect.

A heath's green wild lay open to his view,
With ſhrubs and field flowers deck'd of varied hue.
There hawthorns all their richer bloom diſclos'd,
Here flexile broom's bright yellow interpos'd:
There purple orchis, here pale daiſies ſpread,
And ſweet May lillies richeſt odour ſhed.
Eclog. I.

Sweet

Sweet was the covert where the ſwains reclin'd,
There ſpread the wild roſe, there the woodbine twin'd;
There ſtood green fern, there o'er the graſſy ground
Sweet camomile and ale-hoof ſpread around;
And centaury red, and yellow cinquefoil grew,
And ſcarlet campion and cyanus blue;
And tufted thyme, and marjoram's purple bloom;
And ruddy ſtrawberries yielding rich perfume.
Gay flies their wings on each fair flower diſplay'd,
And labouring bees a lulling murmur made.

Eclog. II.

I am ſenſible that ſome perſons have affected to hold mere deſcriptive poetry in little eſtimation; but, ſurely, not to mention that deſcription muſt neceſſarily make great part of every narrative poem, and has ever been conſidered as a material talent in the poet; a poem conſiſting of rural painting, may, at leaſt, to the ear have the ſame merit that landſkip painting has to the eye. But few poems of this kind were ever known to come from the pen of a good writer without a mixture of moral reflections; and in this, the poetry of Scott is entitled to no little approbation.

While

While herds and flocks their annual increaſe yield,
And yellow harveſts load the fruitful field,
Beneath grim Want's inexorable reign,
Pale Sickneſs oft, and feeble Age complain!
Why this unlike allotment, ſave to ſhow
That who poſſeſs, poſſeſs but to beſtow.

Eclog. III.

But whatever praiſe is due to the harmony of Mr. Scott's numbers, I cannot paſs over a peculiarity in his predilection for ſometimes laying an uncommon accent on words or ſyllables, which he thought gave ſtrength to the line. A few inſtances of this may be ſeen in the forecited verſes: this liberty ſhould, in my opinion, be very ſparingly uſed.

Roughneſs of verſe may, indeed, be emphatical where the image requires it, of which a forcible example is given in one of the above paſſages.

"The ſlow wain grating bore its cumbrous load."

Mr. Scott had often profeſſed himſelf a great admirer of the critical and poetical abilities of the Wartons, and had long deſired to be known to the learned and elegant author of the Eſſay on Pope. His literary opinions had always nearly coincided with thoſe of the two brothers, and about Chriſtmas 1781, I had the pleaſure of introducing him to Dr. Warton, and the Rev. Mr. Thomas Warton.

The Doctor was much ſtruck with the unaffected frankneſs and amiable ſimplicity that appeared in the converſation of my friend Scott, who was highly pleaſed with this interview, and expreſſed the warmeſt wiſhes to cultivate that acquaintance, which the Doctor and his brother ſeemed no leſs deſirous to improve. We parted, but, alas! we parted to meet no more.

In

In the ſpring of 1782, he publiſhed his long projected volume of poetry. His mind had been very anxious for the ſucceſs of this publication; he had ſpared no pains to render the pieces that were to compoſe it as correct as poſſible; and the volume was elegantly decorated with a number of engravings.

The greater part of Scott's poems are turned on rural imagery, in which it will be found that his principal merit is novelty in deſcription, and a laudable endeavour to introduce an occaſional ſimplicity of ſtile, perhaps too much rejected by the preſent faſtidious readers of poetry. He was certainly no ſervile copyiſt of the thoughts of others: for living in the country, and being a cloſe and accurate obſerver, he painted what he ſaw, though he muſt unavoidably ſometimes fall on ideas and expreſſions common to all paſtoral writers. He cultivated the knowledge of natural hiſtory and botany,

which enabled him to preſerve the truth of nature with many diſcriminating touches, perhaps not excelled by any deſcriptive poet ſince the days of Thomſon.

Having already noticed the FOUR ELEGIES, the ELEGY of 1768, and the Poem of AMWELL, it remains to take a general view of the other pieces that compoſe the volume.

Of theſe the Amœbæan Eclogues ſeem to me the leaſt happy of Mr. Scott's productions; for in his attempt at novelty, he has admitted ſuch names and circumſtances, as, in my opinion, no verſification, however harmonious, can make poetical: theſe lines may, in ſome meaſure, ſhew the force of my objections.

Old oaken ſtubs tough ſaplings there adorn,
There hedge-row plaſhes yield the knotty thorn;
The ſwain for different uſes theſe avail,
And form the traveller's ſtaff, the threſher's flail.
Where yon brown hazels pendent catkins bear.——

Eclog. I.

Bid

Bid here dark peas or tangled vetches ſpread,
There buck wheat's white flower faintly ting'd with red,
Bid here potatoes deep green ſtems be born,
And yellow cole th' encloſure there adorn.

Eclog. II.

The following lines are eaſy and affecting.

Beſide his gate, beneath the lofty tree,
Old Thyrſis' well known ſeat I vacant ſee;
There, while his prattling offſpring round him play'd,
He oft, to pleaſe them, toys of oziers made:
That ſeat his weight ſhall never more ſuſtain,
That offſpring round him ne'er ſhall ſport again.

Eclog. I.

In the Oriental Eclogues, he has, with judgment, made uſe of ſuch circumſtances as might give them an air of local truth. This couplet is happily inſerted in alluſion to the Eaſtern fable.

Soft as the night bird's amorous muſic flows
In Zibet's garden when ſhe woos the roſe.

ZERAD.

The following is highly poetical.

There Thirſt, fell demon, haunts the ſultry air,
And his wild eye-balls roll with horrid glare:
There deadly Sumiel,* ſtriding o'er the land,*
Sweeps his red wing, and whirls the burning ſand.

ZERAD.

* The fiery blaſting wind of the deſert.

The Eclogue of Serim, or the Artificial Famine, has much poetical merit; but perhaps it were to be wiſhed, that the philanthropy of the author had not led him to make choice of a ſtory ſo apparently diſgraceful to the Britiſh name in India, the circumſtances of which have been, doubtleſs, greatly exaggerated, while the enormities of a few individuals have been ſwelled, by deſigning men, into a general and univerſal ſpirit of rapine, avarice, and cruelty. The poem opens with ſolemnity.

O! guardian genius of this ſacred wave,
O! ſave thy ſons, if thine the power to ſave!

The

The following image was a particular favourite with the author.

Sad on our ways by human foot unworn,
Stalks the dim form of Solitude forlorn.

The Chineſe Eclogue, called LI-PO, or the GOOD GOVERNOR, has pictureſque touches of the country, and contains many amiable reflections political and moral. The Viſion of Confuſius is very poetical.

'Midſt palmy fields, with ſun ſhine ever bright,
A palace rear'd its walls of ſilvery white;
The gates of pearl a ſhady hall diſclos'd,
Where old Confuſius' reverend form repos'd:
Looſe o'er his limbs the ſilk's light texture flow'd,
His eyes ſerene etherial luſtre ſhow'd.

The Odes, as the author informs us, were written at very different periods, and ſome appear to be his earlieſt effuſions in poetry. The ſtile of theſe odes is various; gay, and familiar, pathetic and ſublime. In the odes on RECRUIT-

ING AND PRIVATEERING, the thoughts are new, and ſingularly characteriſtic of Mr. Scott's religious tenets, and what ought to reflect no little honour on thoſe tenets, ſtrictly conformable to the dictates of every feeling mind, uncorrupted with the maxims of human policy.

I hate that drum's diſcordant ſound,
Parading round, and round, and round!
To thoughtleſs youth it pleaſure yields,
And lures from cities and from fields.—
To me it talks of ravag'd plains,
And burning towns, and ruin'd ſwains,
And mangled limbs, and dying groans,
And widows tears, and orphans moans.

Ode XIII.

How cuſtom ſteels the human breaſt,
To deeds that Nature's thoughts deteſt!
How cuſtom conſecrates to fame,
That reaſon elſe would give to ſhame!

Privateering, Ode XVII.

The Mexican Ode may admit of much praiſe. It opens with a ſpirited abruptneſs,

From

From Cholula's hoſtile plain,
Left her treacherous legions ſlain,
Left her temples all on flame,
Cortez' conquering army came.

It ends with equal dignity after the Prophecy of the Mexican Idol.

Ceas'd the voice with dreadful ſounds,
Loud as tides that break their bounds;
Roll'd the form in ſmoke away.———

The vaniſhing of the demon is attended with circumſtances not very diſſimilar from the diſappearance of the ſpirit of the Cape in Camöens.

The two Epiſtles that follow the odes are written in a very familiar and eaſy ſtrain of verſification.

The ſecond Epiſtle deſcribes the occupations and amuſements of a contemplative mind in the country, and may be conſidered as a picture of the author's own manner of living.

The

The Eſſay on Painting is an elegant piece of verſification, and ſhews, in the fulleſt light, Mr. Scott's turn for the polite arts. He was always a great admirer of painting, and for many years never miſſed an annual exhibition. The poem is ſaid to be addreſſed to a young painter, but has no reference to any particular perſon. It will perhaps be found, that not any very new remarks are introduced on a ſubject, relative to which ſo much has been written, but the rules and obſervations are at leaſt delivered with taſte and perſpicuity.

The opening is poetical.

From ſunny Adria's ſea-ſurrounded towers,
From Tyber's vales and Arno's viny bowers,
The Muſe of painting ſeeks Britannia's plain,
And leads to Thames's bank her favourite train.

His obſervation is very juſt on the ſuperiority and permanence of the reputation acquired by the higher ſtile of painting and poetry, in the ſublime and the pathetic, compared with the lower claſs of humour and common life.

'Tis

'Tis general nature, in thy art and mine,
Muſt give our fame in future times to ſhine:
Sublime and pathos, like the ſun's fix'd flame,
Remain and pleaſe thro' every age the ſame:
Humour's light ſhapes, like vapours in the ſky,
Riſe, paſs, and vary, and for ever fly:
Hogarth and Swift, if living, might deplore
Half their keen jokes, that now are jokes no more.

Among ſeveral ſubjects pointed out as proper for the pencil, he inſtances the Maria of Sterne, which paſſage, at the ſame time that it does juſtice to the merit of that admirable painter of manners, contains a cenſure, on which occaſion he inſerts the following note, in which every ſober chaſte judgment muſt heartily concur.

" There probably never was a more ſtriking inſtance of miſapplication of talents than in him (Sterne): with ſuperior powers for the pathos, he choſe to deſcend to ribaldry, that affronted the taſte, and corrupted the morals of the public. What pity that the gold had not

not been ſeparated from the droſs, and the latter conſigned to an oblivion it ſo richly merits."

He pays the following compliment to the memory of my ingenious friend Mr. Mortimer.

O! where is he, whoſe thought ſuch grandeur gave
To bold Fitzwalter, and the barons brave,
When rang'd in arms along their Thames's ſtrand,
They ſnatch'd their charter from a tyrant's hand?
Thro' all the ſcenes his rapid ſtroke beſtow'd,
Roſa's wild grace and daring ſpirit glow'd;
In him——ah! loſt ere half his powers were ſhown,
Britain perhaps an Angelo had known!

The volume is cloſed with a few Sonnets, and other copies of verſes written on temporary ſubjects, ſome of which are of a very early date (1766) and one dated as far back as 1756.

The public gave a very favourable reception to this collection, of which a candid and liberal account was exhibited by

by the critics of the Monthly Review. But the writer of this article in the Critical Review entered upon the examination of our author's poems with a petulance of illiberal humour, highly reprehenſible in a literary cenſor, whoſe duty it is to deliver his ſentiments with impartiality, but who certainly debaſes his own conſequence, by the introduction of trifling witticiſms and ill-placed raillery.

The remarks on Scott's book were prefaced by the Critical Reviewer with the following words: "Theſe poems were written by a *Quaker*, a circumſtance rather extraordinary in the world of letters; rhyming being a ſin, which gentlemen of that fraternity are ſeldom guilty of: Mr. Scott is, notwithſtanding, ſtrongly attached to it." Speaking of the plates, with which the volume is decorated, the Reviewer adds, "To ſay the truth, there is a profuſion of ornament and finery about this book, not quite

quite ſuitable to the plainneſs and ſimplicity of the Barclean ſyſtem; but Mr. Scott is fond of the muſes, and wiſhes, we ſuppoſe, like Capt. Macheath, to ſee his ladies well dreſſed."

Mr. Scott, juſtly offended at this indecent treatment, and little accuſtomed to diſguiſe his ſentiments, was induced, with inconſiderate warmth, to publiſh a letter addreſſed, To THE AUTHORS OF THE CRITICAL REVIEW, in which he expoſtulated with them on their conduct, and defended his own poetry. This letter produced a ſecond article in the next Review, and to this Scott replied again, by a letter inſerted in one of the papers, which cloſed this unpleaſant conteſt, in which he had engaged contrary to the opinion of his friends, who would, ſurely, rather have wiſhed that he had adopted the judgment of his friend Dr. Johnſon on a review of the altercation between Dryden and Settle. "The writer, who thinks his work formed

ed for duration, miſtakes his intereſt when he mentions his enemies. He degrades his own dignity, by ſhewing that he was affected by their cenſures, and gives laſting importance to names, which, left to themſelves, would vaniſh from remembrance.*"

From the time of Mr. Scott's ſecond marriage till his death, he ſeems to have enjoyed a life of great tranquillity; gratified with the elegant and unblameable pleaſures reſulting from a well-cultivated mind; and poſſeſſed of a wife, whoſe diſpoſition inſured to him a perpetual ſource of domeſtic peace. He mentions her with unaffected tenderneſs in his Poem of AMWELL, and addreſſes a copy of verſes to her, written in the ſame year, and inſerted in his poetical works twelve years after his marriage.

Our author, who poſſeſſed a very conſiderable portion of critical acumen, had

* Dr. Johnſon's LIFE OF DRYDEN.

minutely

minutely examined ſome of the productions of ſeveral of our poets, and had long deſigned to impart his ſtrictures to the world. This work he had completed, and committed to the preſs in the year 1783, being the volume now offered to the public under the title of CRITICAL ESSAYS.

In the mean time, Mrs. Scott having lately laboured under a very ſerious complaint, for which he was anxious to have the beſt advice, he accompanied her to London on the 25th of October, 1783, and on the 1ſt of December following was attacked with a putrid fever, the ſymptoms of which were from the beginning judged to be dangerous. He had always been particularly apprehenſive of this diſtemper, and was frequently heard to ſay, that he ſhould never ſurvive it. I have been told, that the ſtate of his mind did not a little contribute to ſtrengthen his

his malady, which ſoon baffled all the power of medicine, till, on the 12th of December, eleven days after he was ſeized, having retained his ſenſes to the laſt, with his underſtanding at all times clear and unimpaired, he expired at his houſe in Radcliff, being fifty-four years of age.

He was buried in the Quakers burying-ground at Radcliff, on the 18th of the ſame month; his funeral being attended by a ſelect number of relations and friends, amongſt whom, the writer of this account had the melancholy ſatiſfaction of paying the laſt mark of affection at his grave. He left behind him a widow, and daughter, their only child, about ſix years old.

As I have taken a view of the productions of Mr. Scott, which were printed in his life-time, it may be expect-

ed that ſomething ſhould be ſaid of his poſthumous volume; which indeed may be conſidered to have been publiſhed by himſelf, as the work, before he died, was nearly printed off, and had received his laſt corrections.

This volume diſplays an open manly ſpirit of criticiſm, and may be peruſed by all lovers of poetry with advantage. He ſeems, with reaſon, to have diſputed the claim of Denham, to the reputation which he has ſo long enjoyed, and ſeveral of the paſſages adduced by him, from COOPER'S HILL, very well ſupport his aſſertions: but his ſevere cenſure of what has been ſo often praiſed, particularly by Dryden, and confirmed in ſuch praiſe by Dr. Johnſon, does not appear to me equally convincing, or to take away, in any degree, from the general merit of thoſe four celebrated lines.

He has ſkilfully defended Milton's LYCIDAS againſt ſome of the Doctor's objec-

objections, and has well apologized for the profuſion of imagery admitted into a poem expreſſive of grief. But it may be obſerved, that the opinion offered by any critic on a poetical compoſition, is often rather a matter of taſte than argument: the merit of all works that appeal to the imagination, muſt be determined by the feelings of the generality, not by the ſuffrage of individuals; on which occaſion may well be applied the Doctor's own expreſſive words, "that what is "good only becauſe it pleaſes, cannot "be pronounced good till it has been "found to pleaſe."

An inſtance has already been given of the candour of this admirable writer, in his converſation with Mr. Barclay, on the ſubject of the preſent volume, and I will not omit the opportunity of doing further juſtice to his memory as a critic. In this character he held it his indiſpenſable duty to ſpeak without diſ-

guiſe, of every work under his inſpection. He muſt thus indeed be expected to have created enemies among thoſe whoſe judgments were warped by prejudice, or whoſe minds were vitiated by adulation; but let it be remembered what ſuperior ſatisfaction muſt be felt by real merit, from the praiſe of accurate diſcernment and inflexible ſincerity. It is perhaps certain, that no one poetical reader will univerſally ſubſcribe to the deciſions of Dr. Johnſon, but all may ſurely admire his vaſt intuitive knowledge, and power of reaſoning; and while he never deſcended to the little arts of attacking others by covert ſatire, or implied criticiſm, every lover of truth ought to venerate that noble intrepidity of declaring his thoughts unbiaſſed by the partialities of friendſhip, the ſanction of names, or the long influence of preſcriptive authority.

Scott has judiciouſly pointed out ſeveral inaccuracies in the WINDSOR FOREST

of

of Pope, one of the correcteſt of our poets. The reader may do well to compare this criticiſm, with the remarks of Dr. Warton, in his ESSAY ON THE GENIUS AND WRITINGS of Pope, "A book," ſays the liberal Dr. Johnſon, "which "teaches how the brow of criticiſm "may be ſmoothed, and how ſhe may "be enabled, with all her ſeverity, to "attract and to delight."

His remarks on GRONGAR HILL, and THE RUINS OF ROME, of Dyer, and the ORIENTAL ECLOGUES of Collins, are replete with taſte, the defects and beauties of each poem being ſingled out with great diſcernment. The ELEGY of Gray ſeems to have given him little room for objection, but I think that he has indulged himſelf too much in his propoſed tranſpoſitions of ſeveral paſſages in that poem. Amidſt all the beauties of Goldſmith's DESERTED VILLAGE, he has very clearly diſcovered redundancy and incorrectneſs. His ſtrictures

tures on Thomſon are generally juſt, and ſeveral examples are given of falſe figures and confuſed metaphors, wherein the poet's fancy has carried away his judgment. It appears that he commenced a critic on Denham, Pope, and Thomſon, in his correſpondence with his friends Cockfield and Turner, in the year 1756, and 1761.

It has been ſhewn, that the active member of ſociety, the public ſpirited man, and contemplative ſtudent, were all united in Scott, and that he had a conſtant deſire to be acquainted with every character of learning or genius. He often regretted that he had not known the late Mr. Garrick, of whom, though he never went to the theatres, he had conceived a high idea; and indeed he has frequently expreſſed to me a ſtrong curioſity to have ſeen him act. He imparted, without any diſguiſe, his real feeling and ſentiments on his own works,

or

or on the works of others. " He con-
" ſulted his friends, and liſtened with
" great willingneſs to criticiſm, and
" what was of more importance, he
" conſulted himſelf, and let nothing
" paſs againſt his own judgment."*

His manner of reading verſe was very peculiar, yet ſuch as ſeemed to give him a ſtrong perception of harmony: at the ſame time he frequently confeſſed to me that he read ill, and was well pleaſed to have his lines repeated by another. " We are told of Thomſon," ſays Dr. Johnſon, " that among his peculiarities, was a very unſkilful and inarticulate manner of pronouncing any lofty or ſolemn compoſition. He was once reading to Dodington, who being himſelf a reader eminently elegant, was ſo much provoked by his odd utterance, that he ſnatched the paper from his hand, and told him, that he did not underſtand

* Dr. Johnſon of Pope.

" his

" his own verſes." This is a defect very common in authors; Goldſmith, one of the moſt harmonious and eaſy poets, was a very unſkilful reader.

Scott was a great lover of muſic, but had no practical knowledge of it. He preferred the time for poetical compoſition, when the reſt of the family were in bed; and it was frequently his cuſtom to ſit in a dark room, and when he had compoſed a number of lines, he would go into another room where a candle was burning, in order to commit them to paper. Though in general very regular in his hour of retiring to reſt, he would ſometimes be up great part of the night, when he was engaged in any literary work.

In his perſon he was tall and ſlender, but his limbs were remarkably ſtrong and muſcular: he was very active, and delighted much in the exerciſe of walking

ing: his countenance was cheerful and animated.

HAVING, agreeable to ſuch materials as could be procured, given an account of my late valuable friend Mr. Scott, I will not here expatiate further on his moral or intellectual character, ſince this may be better known from the preceding pages, and from a peruſal of his works, that truly reflect their author's mind, than from any laboured ſtrain of friendly panegyric.

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CRITICAL

ERRATA.

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108 l. 10 *dele* the period at the end of the line, and place a ſemicolon
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CRITICAL ESSAYS.

ESSAY I.

On DENHAM'S COOPER'S-HILL.

" One ſimile that ſolitary ſhines,
" In the dry deſart of a thouſand lines,
" Or lengthen'd thought that gleams through many
" a page,
" Has ſanctify'd whole poems for an age."

POPE.

PERHAPS few poems have received more indiſcriminate applauſe, yet poſſeſſed leſs intrinſick merit, than Denham's Cooper's-Hill. Dryden praiſed it; Pope honoured it with a poetical encomium; and Dr. Johnſon (with whom, from perſonal reſpect, I am ſorry to differ in opinion) has treated it as a work of

A conſe-

conſequence, and touched its faults with tenderneſs.

The laſt-mentioned ingenious Critick has credited Denham with the invention of the Loco-deſcriptive Poem; a poem which is ſuppoſed to take ſome particular ſpot for its ſubject, to deſcribe its natural ſituation or appearance, to relate the moſt remarkable events to which it has been witneſs, and from either the proſpect or the narrative to introduce ſuch moral ſentiment as will eaſily ariſe. Geographers and hiſtorians have however ſo often deſcribed particular places, related their principal occurrences, and moralized from them, that Denham's ſole claim to invention or originality, ſeems confined to the addition of verſe. Camden, Speed, and the Author of the Tour through Great-Britain, have as much right to the title of deſcriptive poets, as Denham and Pope, unleſs the latter paint nature with more preciſion and elegance, relate tranſactions with more

more dignity and eaſe, and convey their thoughts in a muſical and correct verſification. How far the writer in queſtion has ſucceeded in theſe reſpects, remains to be examined.

Cooper's-Hill, the profeſſed ſubject of his piece, is not mentioned by name, nor is any account given of its ſituation, produce, or hiſtory; it ſerves, like the ſtand of a teleſcope, merely as a convenience for viewing other objects.

The opening of the poem has no proper connection of cauſe and effect. That there were ſome poets, who had never dreamed on Parnaſſus, nor drank at Helicon, does by no means infer that Parnaſſus and Helicon did not inſpire thoſe other poets who had deſcribed them. Deſcriptive poems are generally ſuppoſed rather to elevate their ſubject, than to degrade it; but our author plainly tells us, that his Hill would have no

importance, if his poetry did not render it important. He alſo confounds corporeal flight with intellectual: the circumſtance of ſtanding on a hill, could ſurely be no advantage to the latter:

> Sure there are poets who did never dream
> Upon Parnaſſus, nor did taſte the ſtream
> Of Helicon; we therefore may ſuppoſe
> Thoſe made not poets, but the poets thoſe.
> And as courts make not kings, but kings the court,
> So where the Muſes and their train reſort,
> Parnaſſus ſtands: if I can be to thee
> A Poet, thou Parnaſſus art to me.*
> Nor wonder if *(advantag'd in thy flight,*
> *By taking wing from thy auſpicious height;)*
> Thro' untrac'd ways, and airy paths I fly,
> More boundleſs in my fancy than my eye.

This is every thing relative to the Hill itſelf; the proſpect from it ſucceeds.

* This couplet, which probably at the time it was written, might be thought a very fine one, ſeems to have been hinted by two lines quoted by BURTON, in his Anatomy of Melancholy, from an anonymous author:

> Be thou the Lady Creſſet-light to me,
> Sir Trolly Lolly will I be to thee.

The

The Metropolis and its cathedral are the firſt ſubjects of notice. Such a magnificent ſcene would certainly have inſpired a genuine poet with correſpondent ideas. Milton, whoſe eye had caught all grand and beautiful objects, and whoſe imagination ſeems afterwards to have recalled them with pleaſure, has repeatedly deſcribed the external appearance of a great city, with much force and elegance:

——————— Some renown'd metropolis,
With gliſtering ſpires and pinnacles adorn'd,
Which now the riſing ſun gilds with his beams.
PARADISE LOST, B. 3. l. 549.

——————— An imperial city ſtood,
With tow'rs and temples proudly elevate,
On ſeven ſmall hills with palaces adorn'd,
Porches and theatres, baths, aqueducts,
Statues and trophies, and triumphal arcs,
Gardens and groves.———
PARADISE REGAINED, B. 4. l. 33.

——————Underneath them fair Jeruſalem,
The holy city, lifted high her towers;

And higher yet the glorious temple rear'd
Her pile, far off appearing like a mount
Of alabaſter, topt with golden ſpires.
PARADISE REGAINED, B. 4. l. 544.

Denham coldly tells us that St. Paul's is a ſacred pile, ſo high and ſo vaſt, as to render it uncertain whether it is part of the earth or of the ſky; a mountain or a cloud;* that it was the theme of a muſe, whoſe flight reached and ſoared above its height; and that it ſhall remain ſafe from ſword and fire, becauſe it is ſung by the beſt of poets, and preſerved by the beſt of kings. The unprejudiced reader will ſcarcely contend that theſe thoughts poſſeſs any remarkable inhe-

* St. Paul's, wherever viewed, bears no reſemblance to a mountain or a cloud; if it appears at all, it appears as a building. The writer of theſe remarks has ſometimes, from the immediate environs of London, ſeen the hovering ſmoke concealing the body of the church, while the cupola, illuminated by the noon-day ſun, has ſeemed as if ſeated on a cloud, or ſuſpended in the air. There is a ſublimity in this appearance, remarkably pleaſing.

rent

rent merit; nor will he perhaps think that they derive any recommendation from being expreſſed in the following verſes. The author ſays, his eye *ſalutes* the place:

Crown'd with that ſacred pile, ſo vaſt, ſo high,
That whether 'tis a part of earth or ſky
Uncertain ſeems, and may be thought a proud
Aſpiring mountain, or deſcending cloud;
Paul's, the late theme of ſuch a Muſe,* whoſe flight,
Has bravely reach'd, and ſoar'd above thy height:
Now ſhalt thou ſtand, though ſword, or time, or fire,
Or zeal more fierce than they thy fall conſpire;
Secure while thee the beſt of poets ſings,
Preſerv'd from ruin by the beſt of kings.

Dyer, that ſublime, but ſtrangely neglected poet, has, in his Ruins of Rome, touched a ſimilar ſubject with great dignity and conciſeneſs:

That fane was Jove's; its ſpacious golden roof
O'er thick ſurrounding temples beaming wide,

* Mr. WALLER.

Appear'd, as when above the morning hills,
Half the round ſun aſcends.———

Of the City we have no deſcription, only than that it *lies* under St. Paul's, and *riſes* like a miſt beneath a hill. We have, however, other matter reſpecting it, of ſomewhat curious character. Its *ſtate* probably deſigned for pomp or grandeur, and its *croud*, both actual objects of ſight, which nevertheleſs could not be ſeen at a diſtance: and its *wealth* and *buſineſs*, which as abſtract ideas, could not be ſeen any where, are here jumbled together, and compared to a cloud. Theſe objects alſo are ſaid to be *nothing* but what they *ſeem*; that is to ſay, the *cloud* with which they have been juſt placed in compariſon. But the reader ſhall judge from the text itſelf, and ſee if he can find any interpretation that will acquit the paſſage of the charge of abſurdity:

Under

Under his proud ſurvey the city *lies*,
And like a miſt beneath a *hill* doth *riſe*;
Whoſe ſtate and *wealth*, the *buſineſs* and the *croud*,
Seems at this diſtance but a darker cloud:
And *is* to him who rightly things eſteems,
No other in effect, than what it *ſeems*.*

From London the poet makes a ſudden tranſition to Windſor, and tells us in four dull diffuſe couplets, what he might have told in one, that it ſtands on a pleaſant hill. The contraſt of a ſuppoſed rugged precipice, may be thought to aſſiſt in conveying a juſt idea of the place; but ſuch negative deſcription, or illuſtration, of what a thing *is*, by what it *is not*, on the contrary, ſerves

* Among the mob of gentlemen who wrote with eaſe, violation of grammatical propriety was a venial crime. We have here a wrong nominative caſe to the pronoun relative *whoſe*, which makes nonſenſe: the author meant to ſpeak of the city's ſtate, wealth, &c. but in reality he ſpeaks of a hill's ſtate, wealth, &c. 'like a *hill* doth riſe, *whoſe ſtate*, and *wealth*, &c.' The four ſubſtantives alſo, *ſtate*, *wealth*, *buſineſs*, *croud*, combined by the conjunctive *and*, form a plurality; the verbs *is*, and *ſeems*, are ſingular.

only

only to confuſe attention with a variety of objects. The apoſtrophe to Windſor, is abrupt and aukward; and contains matter which will ſurely find few advocates for its propriety or elegance. To *heighten* an object, is generally underſtood to augment or increaſe it; but *meekneſs* certainly cannot be augmented or increaſed by *majeſtick grace:* the reverſe would have been right; *majeſtick grace* may be diminiſhed by *meekneſs*. What ſubject was deſigned by the obſcure and affected appellation, *pompous load*, ſeems doubtful; probably it was the caſtle:

> Windſor the next (where Mars and Venus dwells,
> Beauty with ſtrength) above the valley *ſwells*
> *Into my eye*, and doth itſelf preſent
> With ſuch an *eaſy*, and *unforc'd* aſcent,
> That no ſtupendous precipice denies
> Acceſs, no horror turns away our *eyes:*
> But ſuch a riſe as doth at once *invite*
> A pleaſure and a reverence from the ſight.
> Thy mighty maſter's emblem, in whoſe face
> *Sat* meekneſs, *heighten'd* with majeſtic grace;

Such

Such ſeems thy gentle *height*, made only proud
To be the baſis of that *pompous load*,
Than which a nobler weight no mountain bears,
But Atlas only, which ſupports the ſpheres.

Sentiments that have no foundation in fact, or in reaſon, can have no merit. Such we ſhall meet with in our next quotation, which, beſides, will not be eaſily acquitted of profaneneſs. That Nature, when forming Windſor-Hill, was guided by a *wiſer Power* than Chance, implies that ſhe is guided by Chance ſometimes; and if ſhe was guided by a *wiſer Power* in that inſtance, ſuch *Power* is moſt irreverently introduced on the ſuppoſed trifling buſineſs of providing a proper ſituation for a king's reſidence:

When Nature's hand this ground did thus advance,
'Twas guided by a *wiſer power* than Chance;
Mark'd out for ſuch an uſe, as if 'twere meant
T'invite the builder, and his choice prevent.*

* Grammatical conſtruction is here again flagrantly violated; as the lines ſtand, it is *nature's hand*, not Windſor, that was marked out for a place to build on.

The

The next lines are obvious nonſenſe. There muſt exiſt *choice*, wherever a thing is *choſen*, however ſtrong the inducement be to *chuſe* it:

> Nor can we call it *choice*, when what we *chuſe*,
> Folly or blindneſs only could refuſe.

Compariſon with a non-entity, ſurely cannot elevate a real object. The mythological fables of Atlas, and the towery crown of Cybele, bear no relation, and add no dignity, to an Engliſh hill or palace:

> A crown of ſuch majeſtic tow'rs doth grace
> The gods great mother, when her heavenly race
> Do homage to her———*

* Denham has not even the merit of originality, in this puerile ridiculous compariſon. It had been uſed before, and better expreſſed:

> Such is the Berecynthian goddeſs bright,
> In her ſwift chariot with high turrets crown'd;
> Proud that ſo many gods ſhe brought to light;
> Such was this city in her good days found.
>
> SPENSER'S RUINS of ROME: from BELLAY.

Not

The verſes in which our author expatiates on the doubtful origin of his royal manſion, certainly do him no great honour:

> Not to look back ſo far to whom this iſle,
> Owes the firſt glory of ſo *brave* a pile;
> Whether to Cæſar, Albanact, or *Brute*,
> The Britiſh Arthur, or the Daniſh *Canute*;
> (Though this of old, no leſs conteſt did move,
> Than when for Homer's birth ſeven cities ſtrove;)
> (Like him in birth thou ſhould'ſt be like in fame,
> As thine his fate, if mine had been his flame;)
> But whoſoe'er it was, Nature deſign'd
> For a *brave place*, and then as *brave* a mind.

A Deſcriptive poem ought, of all poems, to be eaſily intelligible. Cooper's-Hill is ſo obſcure, that repeated peruſals are neceſſary to diſcover its meaning; which when diſcovered, is often found to be abſurd. The Poet, from mentioning Windſor, takes occaſion to mention Edward the third. Perhaps there cannot be any where found a more

more ſtriking inſtance of that ſpecies of nonſenſe, ludicrouſly ſtyled Hiberniciſm, than we meet with here. Our author aſſerts, that in caſe Edward had poſſeſſed the gift of *preſcience*, he could have *prevented* both the *paſt* and the *future*, and directed the conduct of his *anceſtors*, and of *poſterity*. But his own words ſhall be quoted, firſt in a proſe verſion, and then as they ſtand in his rhyming couplets. He ſays, that 'if deſtiny 'had given Edward ſkill to know her 'will, that then all the blood which 'himſelf, and his *grandfather* ſhed, and 'all that theſe ſiſter nations bled *ſince*, 'had been *unſpilt*; and that he had 'known, that all which *he* ſpilt had 'been *his own*:'

Had thy great deſtiny but given thee ſkill
To know, as well as power to act, her will,
That from thoſe kings who then thy captives were,
In after times ſhould ſpring a royal pair;
Who ſhould poſſeſs all that thy mighty power,
Or thy deſires more mighty, did *devour*;
To whom their better fate reſerves whate'er
The victor hopes for, or the vanquiſh'd fear;

That

That blood which thou and thy great *grand-*
ſire ſhed,
And all that *ſince* theſe ſiſter-nations bled,
Had been *unſpilt*, and happy Edward known,
That all the blood *he* ſpilt had been *his own*.

The writer, who quits his ſubject for heterogeneous, or unnatural digreſſion, diſcovers no great judgment. As Cooper's-Hill affords a ſight of Windſor, there could be no impropriety in paying Windſor ſome attention; to proceed to the hiſtory of a king who was born there, was rather too wide a deviation; but to deſcant on that king's inſtitution of an order of knighthood,* muſt be an unpardonable eccentricity. Our author on this occaſion talks of a perſonage whom Edward choſe for a patron, and who was a ſoldier and a martyr; this we gueſs to be the Engliſh tutelar Saint George. He next ſpeaks of another, of whom Edward ſeemed to *foretell* and *propheſy*, who joined an azure round to

* The Garter.

his

his realms: the party meant by this deſcription, is not ſo eaſily aſcertained. Laſtly, he gives us a wonderful ſubject of contemplation, an *endleſs bound* with *liquid arms*, which extend to the world's extremeſt *ends:*

> When he that patron choſe in whom are *join'd*,
> Soldier and martyr, and his arms confin'd
> Within the azure circle, he did ſeem
> But to *foretell* and *propheſy* of him,
> Who to his realms that azure round hath *join'd*,
> Which nature for their bound at firſt deſign'd;
> That *bound* which to the world's extremeſt ends,
> *Endleſs* itſelf, its *liquid arms* extends.

In a Deſcriptive Poem, the proper names of places are abſolutely neceſſary, for the ſake of perſpicuity; and if judiciouſly choſen and employed, they always afford pleaſure. Denham ſeems to have been greatly averſe to the uſe of them. The early editions of his poem inform us in a note, that the following lines relate to Chertſy-Abbey, otherwiſe it would be rather difficult to gueſs their intended

intended application. Perhaps it is not poſſible for any thing that bears the name of verſes, to be more proſaic than theſe:

> My fixed thoughts my wandering eye betrays,
> Viewing a neighbouring hill, whoſe top ſo late
> A chapel crown'd, 'till in the common fate
> The adjoining Abbey fell, (may no ſuch ſtorm
> Fall on our time, where ruin muſt reform!)

Pope's definition of poetry, when he miſnamed it *wit*, is probably at once the moſt conciſe and moſt juſt ever given:

> True wit is nature to advantage dreſt,
> What oft was thought, but ne'er ſo well expreſt.

Denham, and his cotemporaries, on the contrary, ſeem to have imagined all merit to conſiſt in thinking differently from others, and in collecting uncommon, or remote and fanciful reſemblances. This merit, however, muſt ſuffer ſome degradation, when it is conſidered as often actually in poſſeſſion of the loweſt vulgar, of the plough-boy, the

waterman, and the cinder wench.* Our author, from the foregoing quotation, where he oddly intitles the reformation a ſtorm, takes occaſion to deſcant on that ſtorm, in forty lines, fraught with ſimile and antitheſis. Religion is here compared to a block and a ſtork, the frigid and torrid zones, a lethargy, and a calenture. The reader will probably be ſatisfied with the laſt four couplets:

> Who ſees theſe diſmal heaps, but would demand,
> What barbarous invader ſack'd the land?
> But when he hears no Goth, no Turk did bring
> This deſolation, but a Chriſtian king;
> When nothing but the name of zeal ‖ appears,
> 'Twixt our beſt actions, and the worſt of theirs;

* Shakeſpeare knew this; his clowns and other low characters often ſay *very fine things*; witneſs Ancient Piſtol, when he compares Falſtaff's belly to a dunghill.

‖ Propriety of ſentiment is wanting here.—Zeal was the motive of the Mahometan depredations, as well as of Henry's.

What

What does he think our ſacrilege would ſpare,
When ſuch the effects of our devotions are?

We are now come to a very important part of the poem; the deſcription of the Thames. The author one ſhould here expect would have painted, as nearly as poſſible, the appearance of a fine river, amidſt a beautiful region of hills, woods, and vallies. Inſtead of this, we are preſented with a tedious enumeration of ſuppoſed qualities, illuſtrated by a ſtring of far fetched and unnatural compariſons. Thames the river god, or allegorical perſon, and Thames the current of water, are perpetually confounded together. The river god is repreſented as a ſtrange figure, with a wing, ſitting like a hen to hatch plenty; and afterwards as finding wealth where it is, beſtowing it where it is wanted; planting cities in deſarts, and woods in cities:

My eye deſcending from the hill ſurveys,
Where Thames among the wanton vallies ſtrays;

Thames! the *moſt lov'd* of all the ocean's *ſons*,
By his old ſire, to his embraces runs,
Haſting to pay his tribute to the ſea,
Like mortal life to meet eternity.
Though with thoſe ſtreams he no reſemblance hold,
Whoſe foam is amber, and their gravel gold;
His genuine and leſs guilty wealth ‖ t'explore,
Search not his bottom, but ſurvey his ſhore;
O'er which he kindly ſpreads his ſpacious wing,
And hatches plenty for th' enſuing ſpring.
Nor then deſtroys it with too fond a ſtay,
Like mothers, who their infants overlay.
Nor with a ſudden and impetuous wave,
Like profuſe kings, reſumes the wealth he gave.
No unexpected inundations ſpoil
The mower's hopes, or mock the plowman's toil;
But God-like his unwearied bounty flows,
Firſt loves to do, *then loves* the *good he does*;‡

‖ Propriety of ſentiment is here again diſregarded: no reaſon can be aſſigned why corn and graſs are leſs *guilty wealth* than amber and gold. Riches are not guilty for what they conſiſt in, but for the mode in which they are acquired, or the uſe made of them.

‡ The ellipſis of the perſonal pronoun *he* at the beginning of this line, produces egregious nonſenſe: as the text ſtands, the *rivers bounty* is ſaid to love to do *the good*, and at the ſame time the *river itſelf* is ſaid to do it, and the *river's bounty* to love it.

Nor

Nor are his bleſſings to his banks confin'd,
But free and common as the ſea or wind;
When *he* to boaſt, or to diſperſe his ſtores,
Full of the tribute of his grateful ſhores,
Viſits the world, and *in* his *flying tow'rs*,
Brings *home to us*, and makes both Indies *ours*;
Finds wealth where 'tis, beſtows it where it wants,
Cities in deſarts, woods in cities plants;
So that to us, no thing, no place is ſtrange,
While *his fair boſom* is the world's *exchange*.

The applauſe which one writer has beſtowed, is often taken on truſt, and implicitly repeated by another; and when this has been the caſe, prejudice will often attend even thoſe who give themſelves the trouble of an examination. Dryden praiſed two lines in this poem, and then every body praiſed them. They were afterwards thought worthy of particular diſſertations on their ſtructure *; and to complete all, Dr. John-

* There is a diſquiſition on them in HUGHES's Minutes, for an Eſſay on the Harmony of Verſe; and another in SAY's Eſſay on the numbers of Paradiſe Loſt.

ſon (whoſe attachment to this author ſeems pretty ſtrong) has honoured them with his notice:

> O could I flow like thee, and make thy ſtream
> My great example, as it is my theme;
> *Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull;*
> *Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.*

'Theſe lines,' ſays Dr. Johnſon, 'are 'in themſelves not perfect, for moſt of 'the words, thus artfully oppoſed, are to 'be underſtood ſimply on one ſide the 'compariſon, and metaphorically on the 'other; and if there be any language 'which does not expreſs intellectual 'operations by material images, into 'that language they cannot be tranſ-'lated. But as ſo much meaning is 'compriſed in ſo few words; the par-'ticulars of reſemblance are ſo perſpica-'ciouſly collected, and every mode of ex-'cellence ſeparated from its adjacent 'fault, by ſo nice a line of limitation;

'the

'the different parts of the ſentence are
'ſo accurately adjuſted; and the flow of
'the laſt couplet is ſo ſmooth and ſweet,
'that the paſſage, however celebrated,
'has not been praiſed above its merit.
'It has beauty peculiar to itſelf, and
'muſt be numbered among thoſe feli-
'cities, which cannot be produced at
'will by wit and labour, but muſt ariſe
'unexpectedly in ſome hour propitious
'to poetry.'

This is laviſh praiſe; it will now be proper to examine how far it is really merited:

> Tho' deep, yet clear, tho' *gentle*, yet not dull;
> *Strong without rage*, without o'erflowing full.

The meaning here comprized, if ſimply expreſſed, is only this; that the ſtream was *deep* and *clear*, and *gentle* and *full*; the other epithets are obviouſly ſuperfluous. *Depth* and *clarity* are well contraſted; but they are contraſted as

diſtinct perfections, and not as an excellence and a fault. Between *gentle* and *dull*, as applied to motion, the interval, if there be any, is almoſt too ſmall to require notice; though between an *eaſy-flowing* river, and a *ſtagnant* or *unmoving* pool, there is an evident and ample diſtinction. Whether *gentle* and *ſtrong*, when deſcribing the ſame movement, are compatible ideas, may be doubted: ſtrength may be *ſwiftly* or *ſlowly*, but perhaps not *gently*, exerted. That the river was *ſtrong*, ſeems alſo unneceſſarily mentioned, for every large body of water muſt, from its natural gravity, be *ſtrong*. *Gentle* and *without rage*, is however a flagrant tautology; for what was *gentle*, certainly muſt be devoid of *rage*. *Not o'erflowing*, as here uſed, is an inanity, for no river in its common ſtate overflows; and the Thames, in rainy ſeaſons, muſt overflow, as well as other rivers. Water, when level with its banks, always appears moſt pleaſing; and that this was the

the caſe with the Thames, would have been ſufficiently intimated, by ſaying it was *full*. The reſemblance which the poet wiſhes his verſe to bear to his theme, is liable to the ſame objections. Compoſition is often ſaid to be *deep*; but perhaps the adjective is moſtly uſed without any preciſe meaning. A writer might properly wiſh his poetry to be *full*, or replete with thought; *clear*, or perſpicuous in language; and *ſtrong*, that is to ſay forcible or energetic: but if it were theſe, it could not be alſo *dull*, or deficient in ſenſe; *overflowing*, or redundant in expreſſion; and *gentle* and *without rage*, which are little better than ſynonymous with tame or void of ſpirit. The lines in queſtion are equalled in ſweetneſs by many hundreds in our language, written both before and ſince; to attend to them further in that view, would therefore be futile.

To quote the following rant is ſurely all that is neceſſary to expoſe it:

Heav'n

Heav'n her Eridanus no more ſhall boaſt,
Whoſe fame is thine like leſſer currents loſt:
Thy nobler ſtreams ſhall viſit Jove's abodes,
To ſhine among the ſtars, and bathe the gods.

The deſcription (if it can be called ſo) of a place, which we are informed by a note is Windſor Foreſt, now ſucceeds. This deſcription conſiſts of quaint and groundleſs ſuppoſition, tedious digreſſion, and remote ſimile. The expreſſion is confuſed, ungrammatical, and ſcarcely intelligible. Nonſenſe is not uſually pardoned in proſe; it is hard to ſay why it ſhould be praiſed in verſe. The following ſentence, with its parentheſis within parentheſis, deſerves no better name, and it ſurely can gain little advantage by being tagged with rhime. 'Here nature, whether 'more intent to pleaſe us or herſelf, with 'ſtrange varieties, (for wonderful things 'give as much delight to thoſe who 'make

'make them, as to thoſe who behold 'them, though theſe delights move 'from ſeveral cauſes, for ſo we love our 'children and our friends) wiſely *ſhe* 'knew the harmony of things, as well 'as ſounds, ſprings from diſcord:'

> Here nature, whether more intent to pleaſe,
> Us or herſelf with ſtrange varieties;
> (For things of wonder give no leſs delight
> To the wiſe maker's, than beholder's ſight;
> Though theſe delights from ſeveral cauſes move,
> For ſo our children, thus our friends we love;)
> Wiſely ſhe knew the harmony of things,
> As well as that of ſounds from diſcord ſprings.
> Such was the diſcord which did firſt diſperſe,
> Form, order, beauty, through the univerſe;
> While drineſs, moiſture, coldneſs heat *reſiſts*,
> All that we have, and that we are, *ſubſiſts*.

The author, in the following lines, ſhould ſeem rather to have aimed at deſcribing the grand ſcenery of the Weſtmoreland mountains and lakes, than Windſor,

Windſor, whoſe characteriſtick is not ſublimity, but beauty:

> While the ſteep horrid roughneſs of the wood,
> Strives with the gentle calmneſs of the flood;
> Such huge extremes, when nature doth unite,
> Wonder from thence reſults, from thence delight.

There is certainly no extraordinary merit in the following fanciful alluſion; the laſt two lines indeed have more muſick than Denham's can commonly boaſt:

> The ſtream is ſo *tranſparent*, *pure*, and *clear*,
> That had the ſelf-enamour'd youth gaz'd here,
> So fatally deceiv'd he had not been,
> While he the bottom, not his face had ſeen.

Alexander's architect propoſed to cut Mount Athos into a ſtatue; our author performs the ſame operation on his foreſt. When we talk of a mountain's head, ſide, and foot, cuſtom has rendered ſuch expreſſions tolerable to the ear; but to the idea of its forehead and ſhoulders, we are not

not quite ſo eaſily reconciled. There is a want of preciſion in repreſenting a hill as hiding its head among the clouds, and at the ſame time frowning over a ſtream: if the head was *hid* among the clouds, it muſt be *inviſible*, conſequently could not be ſeen to frown. The poet, when he had introduced a number of *different* objects, ſurely need not have ſpoken of their affording *variety*; and as he had before expatiated on the wealth and beauty of his river, it was ſuperfluous to ſpeak of them here again:

But his proud head the airy mountain *hides*
Among the clouds; his *ſhoulders* and his ſides
A ſhady mantle clothes; his curled *brows*
Frown on the gentle ſtream that calmly flows;
While *winds* and *ſtorms* his lofty *forehead* beat
The common fate of all that's high or great.
Low at his feet a ſpacious plain is plac'd
Between the mountain and the ſtream embrac'd;
Which ſhade and ſhelter from the hill derives,
While the kind *river*, *wealth* and *beauty* gives,
And in the *mixture of all theſe appears*
Variety, which all the reſt endears.

When

When the foreſt was deſcribed, it was not improper to mention the deer that inhabit it: Denham accordingly mentions them; calls a ſtag's horns, nature's maſter-piece, and ſays they are placed on the ſtag's head, to ſhew how ſoon great things are made, but are ſooner undone:

> There Faunus and Sylvanus keep their courts,
> And thither all the *horned* hoſt reſorts
> To graze the ranker mead, that noble herd,
> On whoſe ſublime and *ſhady* fronts is rear'd,
> *Nature's great maſter-piece*; to ſhew how ſoon
> *Great* things are made, but ſooner are undone.

Here terminates all deſcription of place or proſpect. The poem thus far contains two hundred and forty lines, of which one hundred and ſeventy, and among them all that can boaſt any thing deſcriptive, have been quoted.

To Windſor Foreſt a ſtag-chace is not peculiar, but it is ſufficiently appropriate

priate to have admitted of a brief notice. A profeſſed poem on the ſubject needed not to have been more tediouſly circumſtantial, that what Denham has here introduced as a kind of epiſode, or appendage. This part however of his piece is rather the correcteſt, and is not deſtitute of ſome natural and poetical ideas. Speaking of the ſtag, he ſays,

> So faſt he flies, that his reviewing eye,
> Has loſt the chaſers, and his ear the cry.
>
> ——He ſees the eager chace renew'd,
> Himſelf by dogs, the dogs by men purſu'd.
>
> So fares the ſtag among th' enraged hounds,
> Repels their force, and wounds returns for wounds.

The following may be admired by ſome, but it ſeems to have a doubtful claim to praiſe:

> Now every leaf, and every moving breath
> Preſents a foe, and every foe a death.

But

But the majority of our author's lines even here, are of different character. The ſentiment in the enſuing is unnatural, and conſequently unpleaſing:

> Then *curſes* his *conſpiring feet*, whoſe ſcent
> Betrays that ſafety which their ſwiftneſs lent.
>
> ——————the herd *unkindly wiſe*,
> Or chaſes him from thence, or from him flies;
> Like a declining ſtateſman left forlorn
> To his friend's pity, and purſuer's ſcorn;
> With *ſhame remembers*, while himſelf was one
> Of the ſame herd, himſelf the ſame had done.

Among other ridiculous conceits, the ſtag is ſuppoſed to die the more contentedly, becauſe he is ſhot by the king:

> ——The king a mortal ſhaft lets fly
> From his unerring hand, then *glad to die*,
> *Proud of the wound*, to it reſigns his blood,
> And ſtains the chryſtal with a purple flood.

The affair of Runny Mead, in deſcribing any place where that meadow could be ſeen, muſt very properly claim attention.

attention. Such a ſubject a true poet would have painted in the ſtrongeſt colours. Our author has touched it faintly. His narration is diffuſe and of courſe languid and tedious. It conſiſts chiefly of proſaick quibbling lines, with here and there a few that are tolerable. One thing is obſervable and highly meritorious in Denham, that, courtier as he was, he on this occaſion ſpoke with a manly boldneſs in praiſe of civil liberty:

Fair liberty purſu'd, and meant a prey
To lawleſs Power, here turn'd and ſtood at bay;
When in that remedy all hope was plac'd
Which was, or ſhould have been, at leaſt the laſt.
Here was that Charter ſeal'd wherein the crown
All marks of arbitrary pow'r lays down:
Tyrant and ſlave, thoſe names of hate and fear,
The happier ſtyle of king and ſubject bear:
Happy when both to the ſame centre move,
When kings give liberty, and ſubjects love.

publick life as High Sheriff of Surry, Governor of Farnham Caſtle, and Knight of the Bath. In ſuch a man, ſmall literary merit was naturally magnified to much; and the cenſure or praiſe of the day is too often confirmed, without examination, by the cenſure or praiſe of poſterity.

Denham's poetical fame is chiefly founded on his Cooper's Hill, but his Progreſs of Learning, and his poem on Cowley, have far ſuperior merit. His Pieces of a lighter caſt are truly deſpicable; they are feeble attempts at humour, fraught with obſcenity and dulneſs.

ESSAY

ESSAY II.

On MILTON'S LYCIDAS.

TO controvert the common opinion is certainly leſs pleaſing than to confirm it. Reſpecting the Cooper's Hill, I was reluctantly neceſſitated to oppoſe high authorities: reſpecting the Lycidas, I am happy to coincide with the judgment of moſt of my predeceſſors. Between the two performances there is indeed an eſſential difference. Denham's is dull; Milton's is ſpirited: the thoughts of the former are mean, and the numbers unmuſical; the ideas of the latter are grand, and the verſe melodious. The one can boaſt little that merits the

name of good ſenſe; the other is not totally clear of conceits and incongruities. The one is uſually termed a Deſcriptive Poem, but, as I have ſhewn, has nothing that deſerves the title of deſcription; the other is a Paſtoral, and in general well preſerves the rural character.

Dr. Johnſon, who, in his account of Cooper's Hill, concurred with the *vox populi*, has in his account of Lycidas, widely diſſented from it. His cenſure is indeed ſufficiently ſevere. He objects to the form, as that of a paſtoral, eaſy, vulgar, and diſguſting. He aſſerts, that 'whatever images it can ſupply, are 'long ago exhauſted,' and that 'its inhe-'rent improbability forces diſſatisfaction 'on the mind;' that 'it cannot be con-'ſidered as an effuſion of real paſſion, 'becauſe paſſion runs not after remote 'alluſions, or obſcure opinions, rural, 'imagery, or mythological perſonages;' that 'it introduces Heathen deities 'among

'among copſes, flocks, and flowers;' that 'it combines Pagan and Chriſtian characters;' and that 'the diction is harſh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleaſing.'

This derogatory ſentence ſeems to affect paſtoral in general, and to condemn Milton's plan, as well as his execution.

The manners of antiquity differed ſo widely from ours, that ſome ſpecies of poetry, which to the ancients were juſt repreſentations of nature, appear to us improbable; ſuch poetry nevertheleſs does not ceaſe to pleaſe. There is an inherent improbability in modern tragedy, and in modern paſtoral; families do not diſcourſe in blank verſe, nor do ſhepherds converſe in rhyme; yet a well written drama, and a well written eclogue, will always be read with delight. Theocrites perhaps gave a picture of genuine Sicilian rural life. Virgil intro-

duced himſelf, and his friend Gallus, in a ruſtick character, which they never really bore; yet his firſt and tenth eclogues received the approbation of the Auguſtan age, and even now have power to command attention.

When our above-mentioned ingenious critick thinks that Lycidas cannot be conſidered as an effuſion of real grief, he ſeems to have miſtaken the nature of the poem. There is an anxiety from apprehenſion of loſing a beloved object; and there is a grief immediately ſubſequent to its actual loſs, which cannot be expreſſed but in the ſhorteſt and ſimpleſt manner. There is a grief ſoftened by time, which can recapitulate paſt pleaſures in all their minutiæ of circumſtance and ſituation, and can ſelect ſuch images as are proper to the kind of compoſition, wherein it chuſes to convey itſelf. It was no ſudden impetus of paſſion, but this mellowed ſorrow, that effuſed

effuſed the verſes now under conſideration.

That Milton has introduced Heathen deities among his copſes, flocks, and flowers, is perhaps not ſtrictly fact: thoſe perſonages ſeem rather to appear only to his ſuppoſed ſhepherd's imagination. That he has connected Heathen and Chriſtian characters in the ſame poem, is true, but it may be deemed ſome merit, that he has not grouped them confuſedly together; they are viewed in ſucceſſion, one character is diſmiſſed before the other is produced, and they are all ſufficiently diſtinguiſhed. The irregularity of the rhyme is obviouſly the effect of deſign, not of careleſſneſs, and may not pleaſe ſome ears, but the numbers, or component parts of the lines, are in general ſo muſical, that one ſhould think they muſt pleaſe all.

Lycidas

Lycidas is an elegy on a deceaſed friend. The plan of the poem is that of a monody, or ſoliloquy, in which the ſpeaker epiſodically introduces matter which he ſuppoſes to have heard ſpoken by others. The monodiſt begins with an apoſtrophe to the laurel, myrtle, and ivy, perhaps conſidered as funereal greens. This whatever defects it may have, is certainly poetical:

V. 1. Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never ſear,
I come to pluck your berries harſh and crude,
And with forc'd fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year;
Bitter conſtraint and ſad occaſion dear,
Compels me to diſturb your ſeaſon due:
For Lycidas is dead, dead e're his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer:
Who would not ſing for Lycidas? he knew
Himſelf to ſing, and build the lofty rhyme;
He muſt not flote upon his watry bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of ſome melodious tear.

The

The proper name Lycidas, repeated, has an agreeable effect, and the placing it in the ſame part of the line twice, and changing its poſition the third time, gives it additional beauty. An ingenious foreign critick has well diſtinguiſhed between two modes of expreſſion, very different in their nature, but in both of which there is a ſuperfluity of words. The one he terms a pleonaſm, the other a periſſology. The firſt is exemplified, when the ſame idea, by recurring in different, but proper, language, is impreſſed more ſtrongly on the mind; the ſecond, when a profuſion of unmeaning verbiage renders thought indiſtinct, and often unintelligible. The firſt is moſtly the effect of deſign, the ſecond always of incapacity or negligence. The pleonaſm ſeems properly inſtanced, when Lycidas is ſaid to be dead *before his prime*, and immediately after is called *young* Lycidas; for the repetition is here advantageouſly emphatical.

V. 15.

V. 15. Begin then, ſiſters of the ſacred well,
That from beneath the ſeat of Jove doth ſpring,
Begin, and ſomewhat loudly ſweep the ſtring.
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuſe,
So may ſome gentle Muſe
With lucky words favour my deſtin'd urn,
And as he paſſes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my ſable ſhroud.
For we were nurſt upon the ſelf-ſame hill,
Fed the ſame flock by fountain, ſhade, and rill.
Together both, e're the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove afield, and oft together heard
What time the grey fly winds her ſultry horn,*
Battening our flocks with the freſh dews of night,
Oft till the ſtar that roſe at evening bright,
Toward heav'n's deſcent had ſlop'd his weſt'ring wheel—

* Milton's commentators have ſuppoſed the grey fly to be a ſcarabœus, viz. the common grey cockchafer, frequent in moſt places on ſummer evenings. Perhaps the poet rather intended ſome diurnal inſect, and meant to point out the proceſs of a whole day, from morning through noon, to evening and night; marking the firſt by the appearance of the lawns, the ſecond by the hum of the grey fly, expreſſed by the bold epithet of Sultry Horn, and the third and fourth by the appearance and deſcent of the evening ſtar. Thomſon mentions the hum of inſects in the woods at noon.

The

The ſhepherd's wiſh, that in like manner as he purpoſes to lament his friend, he may be lamented by ſome other, is truly pathetick. The picture is lively, and the ſentiment intereſting: we ſee a perſon paſſing by a tomb, and ſuddenly turning to render his tribute of reſpect to the deceaſed, and our minds are ſoothed with the idea of this ſuppoſed inſtance of repayment of funeral eulogy. Gray has beautifully touch'd this natural circumſtance in his church-yard elegy:

> For thee, who mindful of the unhonour'd dead,
> Doſt in theſe lines their artleſs tale relate;
> If chance by lonely contemplation led,
> Some kindred ſpirit ſhall inquire thy fate:
> Haply, ſome hoary-headed ſwain may ſay, &c.

'When Cowley,' ſays Dr. Johnſon, 'tells of Hervey, that they ſtudied together, it is eaſy to ſuppoſe how much he muſt miſs the companion of his labours,

'labours, and the partner of his diſco-
'veries; but what image of tenderneſs
'can be excited by theſe lines,' "We
"drove afield," &c? 'We know that
'they never drove afield, and that they
'had no flocks to batten; and though
'it be allowed that the repreſentation
'may be allegorical, the true meaning
'is ſo uncertain and remote, that it is
'never ſought, becauſe it cannot be
'known when it is found.'

Cowley ſpeaks of Hervey in *propria perſona*, Milton is *pro tempore* a ruſtick poet; one therefore muſt naturally draw his images from the buſineſs of the ſtudy, and the other from the buſineſs of the field. It ſeems not very eaſy to diſcover what idea of tenderneſs is excited by Cowley, the collegian, in his mention of the literary occupations of his fellow-ſtudent, which is not alſo excited by Milton, the ſuppoſed ſhepherd, in his mention of the rural occupations of his

his field companion. Whatever there is of pathos in either, reſults from the recollection of friendſhip terminated by death.* Milton meant only to give his paſtoral ſcene a ſtronger appearance of reality, by deſcending to the particulars of "driving afield," &c. There is no reaſon to believe that his literal ſenſe in theſe reſpects had any allegorical one, analogous or parallel; conſequently there is no occaſion to gueſs what it could be.

V. 32. Mean while the rural ditties were not mute,
Temper'd to the oaten flute;
Rough ſatyrs danc'd, and fauns with cloven heel;

* The paſſage of Cowley, above hinted at, is this:

Say, for ye ſaw us ye immortal lights,
How oft unwearied have we paſs'd the nights?
'Till the Ledean ſtars, ſo fam'd for love,
Wonder'd at us from above.
We ſpent them not in luſts, or toys, or wine,
But ſearch of deep philoſophy,
Wit, eloquence, and poetry;
Arts which I lov'd, for they, my friend, were thine.

From

From the glad ſound would not be abſent long;
And old Damætas lov'd to hear our ſong.

Dr. Johnſon has cenſured this paſſage, and it muſt be acknowledged to be indefenſible. The mind revolts from ſuch a poſitive introduction of imaginary beings. While we acquieſce in the paſtoral idea in general, we ſtart at this particular and violent extenſion of it. Satyrs and fauns can have no buſineſs on Engliſh ground.

V. 37. But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone, and never muſt return!
Thee ſhepherd, thee the woods and deſart caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes mourn.
The willow and the hazel copſes green,
Shall now no more be ſeen,
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy ſoft lays.
As killing as the canker to the roſe,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze;
Or froſts to flowers that their *gay wardrobe* wear,
When firſt the white-thorn blows;
Such Lycidas thy loſs to ſhepherd's ear.

The

The foregoing lines are remarkable for a peculiar languid melody, well ſuited to their ſubject; they ſeem indeed the proper language of complaint. The poetical licence by which ſenſe is attributed to inanimate exiſtence, ſhould be indulged with great caution: there are ſome inſtances in which it pleaſes, and there are others in which it diſguſts. The more important the circumſtances in which it is uſed, the better it ſucceeds. On trivial occaſions, if it is not deſignedly burleſque, it will be ſeriouſly ridiculous. Rural ſcenes may perhaps be properly ſaid to mourn, becauſe a perſon who was wont to frequent them is deceaſed; but not becauſe a ſhepherdeſs frowns on her lover, or a lady loſes her lap-dog. Milton, in the above quotation, has uſed this liberty to great advantage. Simplicity, indeed, is a little violat-

ed, by the conceit of flowers wearing their gay *wardrobe*.

V. 50. Where were ye, nymphs, when the remorſeleſs
deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the ſteep,
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lye;
Nor on the ſhaggy top of Mona high;
Nor yet where Deva ſpreads her wiſard ſtream:
Ah me! I fondly dream
Had ye been there, for what could that have
done?
What could the Muſe herſelf, that Orpheus bore,
The Muſe herſelf for her enchanting ſon,
Whom univerſal nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His goary viſage down the ſtream was ſent,
Down the ſwift Hebrus to the Leſbian ſhore?

This celebrated imitation of Virgil * has great ſublimity and beauty. Nothing can be more poetical, than the ſpeaker, as it were inadvertently, adopting the ancient popular belief in the divinity of the muſes, and regretting their

* Nam neque parnaſſi, &c.

abſence,

abſence, and then with ſudden ſelf-correction, obſerving, that no advantage could have been derived from their preſence. The ſuppoſed ſituations aſſigned to the nymphs of poetry, are romantick, appropriate to them, and ſuited to the occaſion. The mention of the fate of Orpheus, affords a kind of indirect illuſtrative compariſon.

The Monodiſt now combining the characters of ſhepherd and poet, pathetically reflects on the purſuit of learning, rendered fruitleſs by the ſhortneſs of life, and with a noble abruptneſs of tranſition, intimates that he hears Phœbus, as God of verſe, pronouncing praiſe, the recompence of virtue in heaven:

V. 64. Alas! what boots it with inceſſant care,
To tend the homely ſlighted ſhepherd's trade,
And ſtrictly meditate the thankleſs Muſe?
Were it not better done, as others uſe,
To ſport with Amaryllis in the ſhade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?

Fame is the ſpur that the clear ſpirit doth
raiſe,
(That laſt infirmity of noble mind)
To ſcorn delights and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burſt out into ſudden blaze,
Comes the blind fury with th' abhorred ſhears,
And ſlits the thin-ſpun life. But not the praiſe
Phœbus reply'd, and touch'd my trembling
ears;
Fame is no plant that grows on mortal ſoil,
Nor in the gliſtering foil,
Set off to th' world, nor in *broad rumour lies*,
But lives and ſpreads aloft by thoſe pure eyes,
And perfect witneſs of all judging Jove;
As he pronounces laſtly on each deed,
Of ſo much fame in heav'n expect thy meed.

This paſſage has great dignity, but is rather deficient in correctneſs. The diction cannot perhaps be totally exonerated from the charge of affectation and obſcurity. The Latiniſm *Meditate the Muſe*, and the word *thankleſs*, whoſe meaning ſeems here ambiguous, are rather exceptionable. Fame is ſomewhat confuſedly repreſented, both as a motive

motive and a reward; there ſhould have been a diſtinction between the deſire of applauſe as the *ſpur*, and the obtainment of it as a *guerdon*. There is a difficulty in theſe lines:

> Fame is no plant that grows on mortal ſoil,
> Nor in the gliſtering foil,
> Set off to the world.

It ſeems doubtful whether the metaphor of a plant in the firſt line is continued to the ſecond, or exchanged for another. If it is continued, what connexion can a plant have with a foil? if it is exchanged, what is it exchanged for? perhaps a conjectural emendator would read,

> Nor ſtone in gliſtering foil,
> Set off to the world.———*

* Foil is the appellation of a thin piece of metal, in which cryſtals, or other ſtones are ſet, to heighten their colour, or improve their luſtre. Milton ſeems to uſe the word, generally, for any ornament. Perhaps he meant an alluſion to a plant with leaves naturally variegated, or to one on ſome occaſion artificially, or fancifully adorned with gilding.

But moſt probably the metaphor of a *plant* is not varied at all. If it is quitted, it is ſoon reſumed, for after the intervention of a ſuperfluous negative alternative under the name of *broad rumour*; the affirmative deſcribes fame as *living* and *ſpreading by* the pure eyes, that is, in the preſence of all judging Jove.

Mythological machinery is managed with ſo much difficulty, that in modern compoſition it ſeldom fails to diſguſt. Milton, however, has employed it in a manner, which all Dr. Johnſon's ridicule cannot degrade, when he ſays, 'one god aſks another god what is be-'come of Lycidas, and neither god can 'tell.' Milton's friend was drowned in his paſſage from Cheſter, on the Iriſh ſeas. The Monodiſt repreſents himſelf as liſtening to Triton, the herald of the ſea, who comes to exculpate Neptune from occaſioning the misfortune:

V. 88. But now my *Oat* proceeds,
And *liſtens* to the herald of the ſea,
That came in Neptune's plea;
He aſk'd the waves, and aſk'd the felon winds,
What hard miſhap hath doom'd this gentle ſwain?
And queſtion'd every guſt of rugged wing,
That blows from off each beaked promontory;
They knew not of his ſtory,
And ſage Hippotades * their anſwer brings,
That not a blaſt was from his dungeon ſtray'd,
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope, with all her ſiſters play'd.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark
Built in th' eclipſe, and rigg'd with curſes dark,
That ſunk ſo low that ſacred head of thine.

The creation of fictitious perſons, and the deſcription of real ones, have generally been eſteemed among the principal operations of poetry. Camus, the genius of the river Cam, and St. Peter, are now introduced, and their ſuppoſed appearance forcibly painted:

V. 103. Next Camus, reverend Sire, went footing ſlow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet ſedge,

* Hippotades, or Æolus, god of the winds.

In-wrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that ſanguine flow'r, inſcrib'd with woe.*
Ah! who hath reft (quoth he) my deareſt pledge?
Laſt came, and laſt did go,
The pilot of the Galilean lake,
Two maſſy keys he bore of metals twain,
(The golden opes, the iron ſhuts amain)
He ſhook his miter'd locks, and ſtern beſpake.

St. Peter's ſpeech is an animated and ſevere cenſure of the clergy of the times. This ſatire, however juſt, is certainly no neceſſary, nor perhaps very proper, part of the poem, and contains ſome imagery that is more natural and ſtriking, than agreeable; for inſtance:

V. 125. The hungry ſheep look up and are not fed,
But *ſwoln* with *wind*, and the rank miſt they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion ſpread.

Dr. Johnſon's inſinuation, that there is in it a confuſion of the actual feeder

* There ſeems ſome ambiguity in the point of reſemblance here; but the poet probably did not mean that the bonnet's edge was ſanguine or red, but that it was inſcribed with ſymbols of woe.

of

of ſheep with the eccleſiaſtical paſtor, ſeems nevertheleſs void of foundation. To the literal ſhepherd all the circumſtances mentioned ſeem juſtly attributable, though there was doubtleſs here a correſpondent allegorical meaning deſigned for all of them.

The poet now apoſtrophizes to Alpheus, and the Sicilian Muſe; and as if totally forgetting the ſituation of Lycidas, invokes them to call the vales to ſtrew his hearſe with flowers:

V. 131. Return Alpheus, the dread voice is paſt,
That ſhrunk thy ſtreams;* return Sicilian Muſe,
And call the vales, and bid them hither caſt
Their bells and flourets of a thouſand hues.
Ye vallies low, where the mild whiſpers uſe

* Biſhop Newton, from Richardſon, has noticed Milton's poetical judgment in this paſſage; he had marked the ſuperiority of the ſpeech of Apollo, by terming it a 'ſtrain of higher mood.' He now marks the ſpeech of St. Peter, by the grand circumſtance of its ſhrinking the ſtreams of Alpheus.

Of

Of ſhades, and wanton winds, and guſhing brooks,
On whoſe freſh lap the ſwart ſtar ſparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamell'd eyes,
That on the green turf ſuck the honied ſhowers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primroſe that forſaken dies,
The tufted crowtoe, and pale *jeſſamine*,
The white pink, and the panſie freakt with jet,
The glowing *violet*,
The muſk-roſe, and the *well attir'd woodbine*,
With cowſlips wan that hang the penſive head,
And every flower that ſad embroidery wears:
Bid Amarantus all his beauty ſhed,
And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,
To ſtrew the laureat hearſe where Lycid lies.
For ſo to interpoſe a little eaſe,
Let our frail thoughts dally with falſe ſurmiſe.

This paſſage is beautifully deſcriptive, but it is not without defects. Milton is rarely ſo diffuſe, as to talk of 'quaint enamell'd *eyes*, purpling the 'ground with vernal *flowers*;' for eyes and flowers muſt certainly mean one thing; nor is he often ſo careleſs of his rhymes, as to place them on an unaccented ſyllable, as in *jeſſamine*, *woodbine*, and *violet*.

violet. Too many of the flowers, conſidering the occaſion, are ſpecified by name, and the blooms of ſpring, the primroſe, cowſlip, panſie, and crowfoot, &c. are injudiciouſly blended with the productions of ſummer; the pink, the roſe, the amaranthus, and others above-mentioned. The meaning of *every flower that ſad embroidery wears*, is not obvious; and the *daffodillies filling their cups with tears* is an unnatural and trifling conceit. The word *ſurmiſe*, in the laſt line, is uſed as we ſhould uſe *ſuppoſition*.

Imagination, properly directed, will not be employed in producing impoſſible fictions, but in exploring real exiſtence, and ſelecting from it circumſtances grand or beautiful, as occaſion may require.* Such an imagination was that of our

* Without imagination, no man can be a poet at all; without imagination and judgment, no man can be a good poet.

poet

poet, which could accompany the drowned body of his friend beneath the ocean, through a variety of ſuppoſed ſituations, in which he imagines it attended by the newly ſeparated ſpirit. His apoſtrophe to the dolphins muſt however relate to the inanimate form; for the aſſiſtance of dolphins to convey an incorporeal ſubject, would certainly be unneceſſary:

V. 154. Ay me! whilſt thee the *ſhores* and ſounding ſeas
Waſh far away, where'er thy bones are hurl'd,
Whether beyond the ſtormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Viſit'ſt the bottom of the monſtrous world;
Or whether thou to our *moiſt vows* deny'd,
Sleep'ſt by the fable of Bellerus old,
Where the great viſion of the guarded mount
Looks tow'rds Namancos and Bayona's hold;
Look homeward angel now, and melt with ruth:
And O ye dolphins waft the hapleſs youth!

The common concluſion of a funeral elegy, is the beatification of the deceaſed. Milton has not deviated from this plan, but he has executed it with unuſual

uſual grandeur, both of thought and expreſſion. But the paſſage, however ſublime, is not wholly free from faults. The day-ſtar is very poetically, but not correctly introduced, both as a perſon, repairing *his* drooping *head*, &c. and as an orb of radiance, *flaming* in the *forehead* of the morning ſky. There ſeems alſo ſome incongruity in the ſcriptural idea of Lycidas having the tears wiped from his eyes, and the claſſical one of his becoming the genius of the ſhore:

V. 165. Weep no more, woful ſhepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas your ſorrow is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watry floor;
So ſinks the day-ſtar in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping *head*,
And *tricks* his beams, and with new ſpangled ore
Flames in the *forehead* of the morning ſky:
So Lycidas ſunk low, but mounted high
Through the dear might of him who walk'd the waves,
Where other groves and other ſtreams along

With

With nectar pure his oozy locks he leaves,
And hears the *unexpreſſive* ‡ nuptial ſong,
In the bleſt kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the ſaints above,
In ſolemn troops and ſweet ſocieties,
That ſing and ſinging in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.
Now Lycidas the ſhepherds weep no more;
Henceforth thou art the genius of the ſhore,
In thy large recompence, and ſhalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

The termination of the Piece has great merit. The Shepherd elegiaſt, who, contrary to the general practice, has not been yet formally introduced, but only ſuppoſed preſent; is now ſet before us among his oaks and rills, warbling his Dorick lay from morning to evening. Milton, always peculiarly happy in the meaſurement of time, has marked the above-mentioned periods, the one by a fine proſopopoeia, the other by a pictu-

‡ Shakeſpeare and Milton are high authorities, but they cannot authorize ſuch a violent ſubſtitution of one word for another, as *unexpreſſive*; the negative of *expreſſive*, for *inexpreſſible*.

reſque

reſque natural circumſtance; the Morn goes forth in her grey ſandals, and the ſun, after ſtretching out all the hills, ſinks into the ocean:

Thus ſang the uncouth ſwain to the oaks and rills,
While the ſtill morn went out with ſandals grey,
He touch'd the tender ſtops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Dorick lay:
And now the ſun had ſtretch'd out all the hills,
And now was drop'd into the weſtern bay;
At laſt he roſe, and twitch'd his mantle blue:
To-morrow to freſh woods and paſtures new.

Milton has been generally ſuppoſed to have introduced in this poem, a great number of antiquated phraſes. This opinion, however it came to obtain, is erroneous. On a cloſe examination, there will not be found, in near two hundred lines, a dozen words of obſolete character.*

Whether Lycidas ſhould be conſidered as a model of compoſition, has

* Viz. *Rathe, ſcrannel, ſelf-ſame, ſwart, ruth, freakt, trick,* as a ſubſtitute for *adorn,* and perhaps two or three more.

been

been doubted. Some have ſuppoſed that the arbitrary diſpoſition of the rhymes produces a wild melody, adapted to the expreſſion of ſorrow. Some have thought the couplet and tetraſtick with their ſtated returns of chime, preferable. To decide the point by argument, might be difficult; but ſuppoſing two elegies, one of each ſtructure, to be equally well written in other reſpects, probably moſt readers would incline to favour the regular form.‖

Lycidas is a noble poem: the author's name is not wanted to recommend it: its own enthuſiaſm and beauty will always make it pleaſe, and abundantly atone for its incorrectneſs.

‖ There is a Paſtoral on the death of Sir PHILIP SIDNEY, printed with SPENSER's works, a poem of ſome merit, nearly of the ſame conſtruction as LYCIDAS.

ESSAY

ESSAY III.

On POPE'S WINDSOR FOREST.

COOPER'S-HILL has been generally eſteemed the parent of Windſor-Foreſt; and Denham conſequently an original, Pope an imitator. Originality in poetical compoſition has been much too indiſcriminately applauded. Priority of production may perhaps be allowed to add value, where all other circumſtances are equal; but the query, whether a mere hint be preferable to a complete deſign, a rude outline to a finiſhed picture, is a query which will be anſwered in the

affirmative, only from the mouth of ignorance or partiality. Denham happened to think of celebrating a particular place in verſe, Pope might not otherwiſe have thought of doing it; but if Denham wrote a bad poem, and Pope a fine one, to refuſe precedence to the latter, would be flagrant injuſtice. Pope indeed was ſo little obliged to his predeceſſor, that thoſe parts of the Windſor Foreſt, in which he adopted his manner, are the very parts that degrade it.

Windſor Foreſt, the author's age when it was written conſidered, is really a great performance; it has much beautiful deſcription, and muſical verſification, but is not without defects. Dr. Warton has juſtly obſerved, that it has too little matter peculiar to its ſubject. The digreſſion on the Norman tyranny, the detail of Rural ſports, and the ſpeech of father Thames, employ a conſiderable

conſiderable portion of the poem; but they are extraneous parts, that might have ſuited as well in another work.

The firſt ſix lines propoſe the ſubject, and compliment the author's friend, Granville Lord Lanſdown. They are ſucceeded by theſe:

> The *groves* of Eden, vaniſh'd now ſo long,
> Live in deſcription and look green in ſong:
> Theſe, were my breaſt inſpir'd with *equal flame*,
> Like them in beauty, ſhould be like in fame.
> Here *hills* and *vales*, the woodland and the plain;
> Here *earth and water ſeem to ſtrive again*;
> Not chaos like together cruſh'd and bruis'd,
> But like the world *harmoniouſly confus'd:*
> Where *order* in variety we ſee,
> And where though all things *differ*, all *agree*.

Two paſſages in Cooper's Hill, quoted in the foregoing remarks on that piece, are here cloſely copied. Profuſion of thought ſeldom fails to create abſurdity. The place that was compared to Eden, ſurely needed no other compariſon to ex-

aggerate its beauty; and to compare it to the world at large, muſt certainly produce an anti-climax. That which was like Eden, could not be like chaos; the mention of chaos was therefore totally unneceſſary; nor is it eaſy to conceive how that which was even *harmoniouſly confuſed*, could have *order*. The thought however is not more exceptionable than the expreſſion. General meaning may be evident, where preciſion of language is wanting. Pope deſigned to ſay, that if he poſſeſſed Milton's poetical power, Windſor ſhould be as famous as Eden; but he has not ſaid ſo. The groves of Eden are the only object to which the comparative adjective *equal* can relate; and it is nonſenſe to ſay, '*a flame* '*is equal to a grove.*' *Milton's flame* would have been ſenſe, and would not have injured the dignity or muſic of the verſe. The fifth and ſixth lines have a redundance in one part, and a puerile abruptneſs in the other. When *hills, vales,*

vales, &c. had been particularized, it was ſuperfluous to comprize them in the term *earth*. If the poet means to ſay that 'here, as in Eden, earth 'and water ſeem to contend in afford-'ing pleaſure,' his words are not ſufficiently extenſive; '*earth and water ſtrive again*;' a cynical hypercritick would probably aſk, 'when did they ſtrive be-'fore, and what do they ſtrive for now?' *Cruſhed* and *bruiſed* is a proſaiſm and a periſſology; for what is cruſhed muſt of courſe be bruiſed. The general congruity of a number of ſubjects individually diſſimilar, might perhaps have been better pointed out, than by obſerving, that though all things *differed*, all things *agreed*. In ſhort, the three laſt couplets of the quotation are ſo faulty, that had they been omitted, the poem would have been improved by the omiſſion.

Here waving groves a chequer'd ſcene diſplay,
And part admit, and part exclude, the day;
As ſome coy nymph her lover's warm addreſs,
Nor quite indulges, nor can quite repreſs.
There interſpers'd in lawns and op'ning glades,
Thin *trees* ariſe that ſhun each others ſhades.
Here in full light the ruſſet plains extend,
There wrapt in clouds the blueiſh hills aſcend.
Ev'n the wild heath diſplays her purple dyes,
And midſt the deſart fruitful fields ariſe,
That crown'd with tufted *trees* and ſpringing corn,
Like verdant iſles the ſable waſte adorn.

A very ingenious Critic objects to the conceit of obliquely attributing ſentiment to the groves, by the ſimile of the nymph. It ſeems doubtful whether Pope intended ſo cloſe a compariſon, or indeed any thing more than a general lax reſemblance between two partial acts in two different ſubjects: the ſimile however, on all accounts, might as well have been ſuppreſſed. The reſt of the quotation, eſpecially the cloſe, is remarkably beautiful.

Let

Let India boaſt her plants; nor envy we
The *weeping amber*, or the *balmy tree*,
While by our *oaks* the precious loads are born,
And realms commanded which thoſe trees adorn.

The *weeping amber* and *balmy tree* are ſuch indefinite terms, that it is difficult to determine what they were deſigned to expreſs. The next couplet is too remote and fanciful; the reader muſt pauſe ſometime before he diſcovers that the *oaks* are ſhips which bring home ſpices, and command the countries where thoſe ſpices grow.

Not proud Olympus yields a nobler ſight,
Though gods aſſembled grace his towering height,
Than what more humble mountains offer here,
Where in their bleſſings, all thoſe gods appear.
See Pan with *flocks*, with fruits Pomona *crown'd*;
Here *bluſhing* Flora paints th'enamell'd ground;
Here Ceres gifts in waving proſpect ſtand,
And nodding tempt the joyful reaper's hand;
Rich induſtry ſits ſmiling on the plains,
And peace and plenty tell a Stuart reigns.

This paſſage is of little value. To deſcribe graphically and poetically the

diſcriminating peculiarities of any particular ſituation, requires ſuperior abilities; but to compare it to a number of other places, of different character, is certainly no very difficult buſineſs. Windſor was before compared to Eden, it is now compared to Olympus; but the man who has never ſeen Windſor, can receive no idea of its appearance from theſe compariſons. The ſimilitude alſo is defective in another part; there can be no proper parellel between a hill fraught with Pagan deities, and fields fraught with ſheep, and flowers, and corn. The couplets alſo are not correct; the gods are ſaid to appear in their bleſſings, and are beſides introduced in their perſons. The fifth line has an ambiguity; if Pan is only ſuppoſed to be preſent with his flocks, all is very well; but if he is ſuppoſed to be crowned with them, as Pomona is with fruits, the metaphor is abſurd, becauſe the literal

literal circumſtance is impoſſible.* *Bluſhing Flora*, in the ſixth line, is the quaint and indiſtinct language of a ſchool-boy; for why Flora ſhould bluſh, no good reaſon can be given.

Not thus the land appear'd in ages paſt,
A *dreary deſart* and a gloomy *waſte*;
To ſavage beaſts and ſavage laws a prey,
And kings more furious and ſevere than they;
Who claim'd the *ſkies*, diſpeopled *air* and floods,
The lonely lords of *empty* wilds and woods:
Cities laid waſte, they ſtorm'd the dens and caves
(For wiſer brutes were backward to be ſlaves,)
What could be free, when lawleſs beaſts obey'd,
And e'en the elements a tyrant ſway'd?
In vain kind ſeaſons ſwell'd the teaming grain;
Soft ſhow'rs diſtill'd, and ſuns grew warm in vain;
The ſwain with tears his fruſtrate labour yields,
And ſa niſh'd dies, amidſt his ripen'd fields.
What wonder then a *beaſt* or *ſubject* ſlain
Were equal *crimes* in a deſpotic reign?
Both doom'd alike, for ſportive tyrants bled,
But while the ſubject ſtarv'd, the beaſt was fed.

* This is a very common abuſe of language; our poets are ſo fond of crowning, that they crown every thing.

The

The general idea of the above paſſage is this, that our old Engliſh monarchs oppreſſed their ſubjects for the extenſion of foreſts, and the preſervation of game; but this idea is not expreſſed in a ſimple and perſpicuous manner. On the contrary, we find an unſucceſsful aiming at dignity, a redundance of thought, an inconſiſtency of ſentiment, and an occurrence of trifling conceits. To ſay that a king *claims* the *ſkies*, and *ſways* the *elements*, becauſe he claims, by foreſt laws, a property in fiſh and fowl, is hyperbolick bombaſt, a grandeur of expreſſion more than adequate to the occaſion. To ſay that a tyrant is more furious and ſevere than a wild beaſt, that he lays waſte cities, and ſtorms dens and caves, and that he ſtarves his ſubjects, is perhaps deſcribing his ferocity with ſuperfluous expatiation. But intermixed as theſe circumſtances are in the text with other matter, they become ſtill more obnoxious to cenſure: when the

the

the wild beaſts are repreſented firſt as injurious, making the land a prey; next as ſufferers, ſtormed in their dens and caves; and laſtly, as objects of care or ſuſtentation; there is, if not an abſolute contradiction of ſenſe, at leaſt, a diſagreeable confuſion. The aſſertion that beaſts were averſe to ſlavery, the ſuppoſed proof of the non-exiſtence of freedom deduced from their obedience, and the reflection, that while they were maintained, men were ſtarved, are all paltry witticiſms. But there are other objections to this quotation: on the mention of ſavageneſs and prey, fury and ſeverity, dens and caves, our thoughts naturally recur to lions, tygers, and bears; for not to the poor innocent hart, nor ſcarcely to the fox, ſuch attributes can have application. The only lines one would wiſh to retain, are thoſe that obliquely condemn the iniquitous laws, by which the killing man or beaſt was made equally criminal; and even there the language

is

is not correct: by a violent elipſis, a *beaſt* or a *ſubject*, inſtead of the *deſtruction* of a beaſt or a ſubject, is made a *crime*.

Proud Nimrod firſt the bloody chace began,
A mighty hunter, and his prey was man:
Our haughty Norman boaſts that barbarous name,
And makes his trembling ſlaves the royal game.
The fields are raviſh'd from th' induſtrious ſwains,
From men their cities, and from gods their fanes:
The levell'd towns with weeds *lie* cover'd o'er;
The hollow winds thro' naked temples *roar*;
Round broken columns claſping ivy *twin'd*;
O'er heaps of ruin *ſtalk'd* the ſtately hind;
The fox obſcene to gaping tombs *retires*,
And ſavage howlings *fill* the ſacred quires.
Aw'd by his nobles, by his commons curſt,
The oppreſſor *rul'd* tyrannic where he durſt,
Stretch'd o'er the poor and church his iron rod,
And *ſerv'd* alike his vaſſals and his God.
Whom e'en the Saxon ſpar'd, and bloody Dane,
The wanton victims of his ſport *remain*.
But ſee the man, who ſpacious regions gave
A waſte for beaſts, himſelf deny'd a grave!
Stretch'd on the lawn his ſecond hope ſurvey,
At once the chaſer, and at once the prey:

Lo

Lo Rufus tugging at the deadly dart,
Bleeds in the *foreſt* like a wounded hart.
Succeeding monarchs heard the ſubjects cries,
Nor ſaw diſpleas'd the peaceful cottage riſe;
Then gathering flocks on unknown mountains fed,
O'er ſandy wilds, were yellow harveſts ſpread;
The *foreſts* wonder'd at the unuſual grain,
And ſecret tranſport touch'd the conſcious ſwain.
Fair Liberty, BRITANNIA'S goddeſs, rears
Her chearful head, and leads the golden years.

This is a ſpirited paſſage. The ſcene of deſolation is circumſtantially and finely painted,* the ſtory of Rufus is appoſitely introduced, and well told, and the concluſion is boldly, but not improperly poetical. There is however one fault here; a diſagreeable change of

* WARBURTON obſerves, that the twelfth line of the preceding quotation originally ſtood thus:

And wolves with howlings fill the ſacred quires.

POPE, he ſays, altered it, becauſe he thought wolves not common in England at the Norman conqueſt. Strict confinement to hiſtorical truth in ſuch a caſe, was unneceſſary, and the alteration has hurt the poetry, by giving an indefinite, for a ſpecific idea.

tenſe

tenſe, from preſent to paſt, and from paſt to preſent: 'The fields *are* ra-'viſh'd;—the towns *lie* cover'd;—the 'winds *roar*;—the ivy *twin'd*;—the 'hind *ſtalk'd*;—the fox *retires*, &c.' In the following lines, '*Aw'd by his nobles*,' &c. there is alſo a little falling off in other reſpects. But the whole digreſſion, poetical as it is, appears rather miſplaced. The author would have diſcovered better conduct, if, after mentioning the beauty and fertility of his ſcene, he had immediately proceeded to his Rural ſports, with which he might have eaſily connected the tyranny of William, and the affair of New Foreſt.

The Rural ſports have much to praiſe and little to blame. Their progreſſion accompanying the progreſs of the ſeaſons, is regularly maintained; and the language wherein they are deſcribed, has great force and elegance. One couplet is indeed exceptionable; it erroneouſly repreſents

repreſents what is really natural inſtinct in beaſts, as ſomething acquired by imitation from man:

> Beaſts urg'd by us their fellow beaſts purſue,
> And learn of us each other to *undo*.

The following quotations are all eminently beautiful; they are pictures correctly drawn from nature:

> With ſlaughtering guns th'unwearied fowler roves,
> When froſts have whiten'd all the naked groves;
> Where doves in flocks the leafleſs trees o'erſhade,
> And lonely woodcocks haunt the watery glade.
> He lifts the tube, and levels with his eye;
> Strait a ſhort thunder breaks the frozen ſky.

> In genial ſpring, beneath the quivering ſhade,
> Where cooling vapours breathe along the mead,
> The patient fiſher takes his ſilent ſtand
> Intent, his angle trembling in his hand:
> With looks unmov'd, he hopes the ſcaly breed,
> And eyes the dancing cork and bending reed.
> Our plenteous ſtreams a various race ſupply
> The bright ey'd perch, with fins of tyrian dye;

The

The ſilver eel in ſhining volumes roll'd,
The *yellow* carp in ſcales bedropt with *gold*;
Swift trouts diverſify'd with crimſon ſtains,
And pykes the tyrants of the watery plains.

The youth ruſh eager to the ſylvan war,
Swarm o'er the lawns, the foreſt walks ſurround,
Rouſe the fleet hart, and chear the opening hound.
The impatient courſer pants in every vein,
And pawing ſeems to beat the diſtant plain:
Hills, vales, and floods appear already croſs'd,
And e'er he ſtarts, a thouſand ſteps are loſt.
See the bold youth ſtrain up the threatning ſteep,
Ruſh through the thickets, down the valleys ſweep,
Hang o'er their courſers necks with eager ſpeed,
And earth rolls back beneath the flying ſteed.

The Metamorphoſis of Lodona is an excreſcence which might have been ſpared without diſadvantage. The fiction, like other fictions of the kind, is too groſs for even a momentary belief; and

and even to thoſe who admitted the divinity of Pan and Diana, could have no moral but one not authoriſed by experience, viz. that determined chaſtity would be preſerved from violation, by ſupernatural aſſiſtance. The ſtory however, ſuch as it is, is ſimply and pleaſingly related. It is remarkable that Pope, who in ſome other places indulged himſelf in Ovid's affectation and conceit, has in this obvious imitation of that author, cautiouſly avoided thoſe diſguſting puerilities. This part of the Windſor Foreſt has probably been more read than any other, extracts are therefore the leſs neceſſary; the pictureſque paſſage at the concluſion, however, muſt not be omitted:

Oft in her *glaſs* the muſing ſhepherd ſpies
The headlong mountains and the downward ſkies;
The watery landſcape of the pendent *woods*,
And abſent *trees* that tremble in the floods;
In the clear azure gleam, the flocks are ſeen,
And *floating foreſts* paint the waves with green.

So difficult is it to write correctly, that even theſe beautiful lines are not clear of diffuſion. The mountains, ſkies, woods, and flocks, are all diſtinct images; but after *woods* and *trees* had been mentioned, the mention of *foreſts* was a needleſs repetition. The *azure-gleam*, and *green appearance* of the water, are fine natural circumſtances. The word *floating*, muſt here mean ſimply ſuſpended on the ſurface; for though the motion of the ſtream was progreſſive, the reflection of the objects muſt be ſtationary.

Thou too, great father of the Britiſh floods!
With joyful pride ſurvey'ſt our lofty woods;
Where tow'ring *oaks* their *growing honours rear*,
And *future navies* on thy ſhores appear,
Not Neptune's ſelf from all *her* ſtreams receives
A wealthier tribute than to thine he gives:
No ſeas ſo rich, ſo gay no banks appear;
No lake ſo gentle, and no ſpring ſo clear.
Not Po ſo *ſwells* the fabling *Poet's lay*,
While led along the ſkies his *current* ſtrays,

As

As thine which viſits Windſor's fam'd abodes,
To grace the manſion of our earthly gods:
Nor all his ſtars above a luſtre ſhow,
Like the bright beauties on thy banks below;
Where Jove ſubdu'd by *mortal paſſion* ſtill,
Might change Olympus for a nobler hill.

Thames has really been unfortunate in his poets; Denham undeſignedly burleſqued him, and Pope has done him no very enviable honours. Cooper's-Hill, that bad original, is here plainly copied, though it muſt be owned, with ſome improvement. Thames might perhaps have been termed, with propriety, the *monarch* of the Britiſh floods, but there can be no foundation for terming him their *father*; his ſtream does not ſupply other rivers with water, but, on the contrary, is ſupplied by them. The *oak's growing honours*, is an affected kind of catachreſis, and the *future navies*, notwithſtanding it preſents the mind with a new idea, is in fact but a redundance; *oaks* are mentioned as *oaks* in one line,

and *future navies* is but another name for *oaks* in the next. There is nothing to which the perſonal pronoun *her*, in the fifth line, can poſſibly relate; probably it was an error of the preſs for *his*. To talk of *a river ſwelling a poet's lays*, is at beſt puerile. The expreſſion here is alſo too general; we are left to gueſs whoſe lays* are *ſwelled* by the Thames. *Mortal paſſion* inſtead of *a paſſion for mortals*, is an ambiguous and unwarrantable contraction. Olympus had appeared in ſimile before, and now it appears again.

The picture of a man in retirement, amuſing himſelf with the ſtudies of botany, chymiſtry, aſtronomy, geography, and hiſtory, is ſpirited and correct, except that the paragraph concludes with an anticlimax:

> Such was the life *great* Scipio once admir'd,
> Thus Atticus and *Trumbal* thus retir'd.

* Probably the Poet meant DENHAM's.

The

The adjective *great*, applied to any particular perſon, as expreſſive of military, political, literary, or moral eminence, for ſome reaſon or other, moſtly diſguſts; and the ill-ſounding proper name *Trumbal*, has, in this inſtance, a ſtill more diſagreeable effect.

> Ye ſacred nine! who all my ſoul poſſeſs,
> Whoſe raptures fire me, and whoſe viſions bleſs;
> Bear me, oh bear me to ſequeſter'd ſcenes,
> To bow'ry mazes, and ſurrounding greens;
> To Thames's banks, which fragrant breezes fill,
> Or where ye muſes ſport on Cooper's-Hill.
> (On Cooper's-Hill eternal wreaths ſhall grow,
> While laſts the mountain, or while Thames ſhall flow).
> I ſeem through conſecrated walks to rove;
> I hear ſoft muſic die along the grove:
> Led by the ſound, I roam from ſhade to ſhade,
> By god-like poets venerable made.
> Here his firſt lays majeſtic Denham ſung;
> There the laſt numbers flow'd from Cowley's tongue.
> O early loſt! what tears the river ſhed,
> When the ſad pomp along his banks was led!
> His drooping ſwans on every note expire,
> And on his willows hung each Muſe's lyre.

This apoſtrophe to the Muſes is a noble one. Warburton marks it as hinted by the *O qui me gelidis* of Virgil, but it is obviouſly imitated from another paſſage of that claſſick:

Me vero primum dulces ante omnia muſæ
Quarum ſacra fero, ingenti perculſus amore
Accipient.———— GEO. 3. v. 475.

The proſopopoiea of Thames weeping, is fine; and even the extravagance of the expiring ſwans, as here introduced, will be readily forgiven.

Who now ſhall charm the ſhades where
Cowley ſtrung
His living harp, and lofty Denham ſung?
But hark the groves rejoice, the foreſts rings!
Are theſe reviv'd? or is it Granville ſings?
'Tis yours my Lord to bleſs our ſoft retreats,
And call the muſes to their ancient ſeats;
To paint anew the flowery ſylvan ſcenes,
To *crown* the foreſts with *immortal greens*;
Make Windſor Hills in lofty numbers riſe,
And *lift* her turrets *nearer to the ſkies*;
To ſing thoſe honours you deſerve to wear,
And add new luſtre to her ſilver ſtar.

Great

Great poets ſhould be cautious how they praiſe, for if they praiſe undeſervedly, they depreciate their own judgment, and miſlead their readers. Pope, young as he was, might chuſe to acquieſce in the popular opinion of Denham, but ſurely he could not ſincerely think him a good writer;* and had Granville not been a Lord, he would ſcarcely have honoured him with ſuch laviſh encomiums. But the general idea of this paſſage is not more exceptionable than the particular thoughts: nothing can be more unintereſting, or indeed more unmeaning, than the ſpecification of the peer's ſuppoſed poetical exertions; his *crowning* the foreſt with *immortal greens*, and *lifting* Windſor turrets *nearer to the ſkies*, &c. The expreſſion in the laſt couplet is alſo ſo obſcure, that every reader will not readily conſider that the *honours* and the *ſilver*

* COWLEY was really a poet; and with all their faults, his writings often merit praiſe.

ſtar muſt relate to the inſignia of the order of the garter.

The preceding part of this Poem was written ſome years previous to the remainder, and the latter bears evident marks of increaſed powers, and improved judgment. It is not only, as the ſubject admitted, a ſtrain of higher mood, but has the advantage of ſuperior correctneſs.

Howard, Earl of Surry, an old Engliſh poet of conſiderable reputation, and real abilities, is here very appoſitely introduced, and his character laconically, but elegantly drawn:

> Here noble Surry felt the ſacred rage,
> Surry the Granville of a former age:
> Matchleſs his pen, victorious was his lance,
> Bold in the liſts, and graceful in the dance:
> In the ſame ſhades the Cupids tun'd his lyre,
> To the ſame notes of love and ſoft deſire:
> Fair Geraldine, bright object of his vow,
> Then fill'd the groves as heav'nly Myra now.

There

There is a groſſneſs of adulation, which a ſenſible man would not accept; and there is a delicacy of compliment, which, if merited, he would not wiſh to refuſe. Surely Lord Lanſdown muſt have gladly exchanged all the profuſe and coarſe flattery of the former quotation, for this ſingle line:

Surry the Granville, &c.

Denham's Regal Hiſtory of Windſor, evidently gave the hint for Pope's; but the vileſt ſign-poſt daubing is not more inferior to the breathing figures of a Reynolds or a Weſt, than the former is to the latter. The reader, however frequently he may have peruſed the following lines, will ſcarcely be diſpleaſed at having them once more put in the way of his peruſal. From Edward's triumphs, to Henry's misfortunes, the tranſition is remarkably beautiful. The ſtrain in one place is animatingly ſonorous, in the other pathetically ſweet:

O would'ſt

O would'ſt thou ſing what heroes Windſor bore,
What kings firſt breath'd upon her winding ſhore,
Or raiſe old warriors, whoſe ador'd remains
In weeping vaults her hallow'd earth contains!
With Edward's acts adorn the ſhining page,
Stretch his long triumphs down through every age;
Draw monarchs chain'd, and Creſſi's glorious field,
The lillies blazing on the regal ſhield:
Then from her roofs when Verrio's colours fall,
And leave inanimate the naked wall,
Still in thy ſong ſhould vanquiſh'd France appear,
And bleed forever under Britain's ſpear.
Let ſofter ſtrains ill-fated Henry mourn,
And palms eternal flouriſh round his urn;
Here o'er the martyr king the marble weeps;
And faſt beſide him once fear'd Edward ſleeps:
Whom not the extended Albion could contain
From old Belerium to the northern main;
The grave unites where ev'n the grave find reſt,
And blended lie the oppreſſor and the oppreſt!

Poets often comply with popular prejudices. That Pope diſapproved the execution of Charles the Firſt, is highly probable;

bable; but that he ſeriouſly ſuppoſed it a national crime, and as ſuch, avenged by ſubſequent national calamities, may be doubted; yet the following paſſage repreſents the matter ſtrongly in that light. The fourth line may have a meaning, but it ſeems difficult to aſcertain what it is; '*old wounds* and *new ones*,' is very indeterminate expreſſion:

> Make ſacred Charles's tomb forever known,
> (Obſcure the place, and uninſcrib'd the ſtone)
> Oh fact accurs'd! what tears has Albion ſhed,
> *Heav'ns* what *new wounds*, and how her *old* have bled!
> She ſaw her ſons with purple deaths expire,
> Her ſacred domes involv'd in rolling fire;
> A dreadful ſeries of inteſtine wars,
> Inglorious triumphs, and diſhoneſt ſcars.

The treaty of Utrecht, juſt concluded when the latter part of this poem was written, afforded the author an opportunity to introduce father Thames as a poetical perſonage, deſcanting on the advantages

vantages of peace, and propheſying the extenſion of commerce. The river god makes his appearance with great dignity:

> In that bleſt moment from his oozy bed,
> Old father Thames advanc'd his reverend head.
> His treſſes drop'd with dews, and o'er the ſtream
> His ſhining horns diffus'd a golden gleam:
> Grav'd on his urn appear'd the moon that guides
> His *ſwelling waters* and alternate *tides*;
> The figur'd ſtreams in waves of ſilver roll'd,
> And on *her** banks Auguſta roſe in gold.
> Around his throne the ſea-born brothers ſtood,
> Who ſwell with tributary urns his flood.

The Poet however, in deſcribing theſe ſea-born brothers, ſems to have forgotten himſelf; for the attributes given to ſeveral of them, are not the attributes of perſons, but of real ſtreams of water. The epithets indeed are generally well choſen, and the fifth line is a fine picture:

* Surely, an error of the preſs for *their* or *his*.

Firſt the fam'd authors of his ancient name,
The winding Iſis, and the fruitful Tame:
The Kennet ſwift for ſilver eels renown'd;
The Loddon* ſlow with verdant alders crown'd;
Cole where dark ſtreams his flowery iſlands lave,
And chalky Wey, that rolls a milky wave;
The blue tranſparent Vandalis appears——

The Lee indeed is evidently deſigned for a perſon, and the Mole and Darent may alſo be viewed in the ſame light:

The *gulphy* Lee his ſedgy treſſes rears,
And ſullen Mole that hides his diving flood,
And ſilent Darent ſtain'd with Daniſh blood.

The principal figure, our attention to whom has been rather interrupted by the deſcription of his attendants, now appears in full view again:

* The river Loddon, which in the former part of the Poem, is made *feminine*, is here one of the ſea-born *brothers*. Such trivial ſlips are not eaſily avoided in works of length.

High

High in the midſt, upon his urn reclin'd,
(His ſea-green mantle waving with the wind)
The god appear'd: he turn'd his azure eyes
Where Windſor's domes and lofty turrets riſe;
Then bow'd and ſpoke; the winds forget to roar,
And the huſh'd waves glide ſilent to the ſhore.

The ſpeech of Thames, long as it is, is poetical, animated, and moſtly correct; it has many beauties, and no faults deſerving notice. Pope ſeems in ſome meaſure to have foreſeen the prevalence of that liberal ſpirit of enterprize, which has produced our late diſcoveries in the remoteſt regions of the globe:

Thy trees, fair Windſor, now ſhall leave their woods,
And half thy foreſts ruſh into thy floods,
Bear Britain's thunder, and her croſs diſplay,
To the bright regions of the riſing day;
Tempt icy ſeas, where ſcarce the waters roll,
And clearer flames glow round the frozen pole;
Or under ſouthern ſkies exalt their ſails,
Led by new ſtars, and borne by ſpicy gales!

Dr.

Dr. Warton has mentioned, with juſt approbation, the following beautiful invocation of peace:

O ſtretch thy wings, fair Peace! from ſhore to ſhore,
Till conqueſt ceaſe, and ſlavery be no more;
Till the freed Indians in their native groves
Reap their own fruits, and woo their ſable loves:
Peru once more a race of kings behold,
And other Mexicos be roof'd with gold.

The concluſion of the Poem does not ſeem to be the moſt happily managed. Father Thames is diſmiſſed, without any notice of his diſmiſſion; the Poet ſeems to take up the matter in his own perſon, as if he himſelf had been ſpeaking, and brings in another ſuperfluous unmeaning compliment to his friend Granville, and another unneceſſary mention of the green foreſts and flowery plains:

Here ceaſe thy flight, nor with unhallow'd lays,
Touch the fair fame of Albion's golden days:
The *thoughts of gods* let Granville's verſe recite,
And bring the *ſcenes of opening fate to light*;

My

My humble muſe in unambitious ſtrains,
Paints the green foreſts and the flowery plains,
Where Peace deſcending bids her olives ſpring,
And ſcatters bleſſings from her dove-like wing.
E'en I more ſweetly paſs my careleſs days,
Pleas'd in the ſilent ſhade with empty praiſe;
Enough for me that to the liſtening ſwains,
Firſt in theſe fields I ſung the Sylvan ſtrains.

That Pope, in his advanced age, had no very high opinion of Deſcriptive Poetry, is generally underſtood; and it has been thought that he had really no very powerful talents for it. Some of the foregoing quotations however ſufficiently evince, that he could have excelled as much in Deſcription, as in Fiction or Satire.

ESSAY

ESSAY IV.

On Dyer's Grongar Hill.

GRONGAR-HILL is a Deſcriptive Poem, of very conſiderable merit, ſpirited and pleaſing. Few poetical pieces have repreſented an extenſive and beautiful proſpect in ſo agreeable a manner. But it is not without its imperfections; there is a redundance of thought in ſome inſtances, and a careleſſneſs of language in others. The verſification, like that of Milton's L' Allegro and Il Penſoroſo, is an irregular mixture of iambick and trochaick lines: a circum-

ſtance rather diſpleaſing to a nice ear. The Poem opens thus:

Silent Nymph, with curious eye!
Who, the purple ev'ning, lie
On the mountain's lonely van,
Beyond the noiſe of buſy man,
Painting fair the form of things,
While the yellow linnet ſings,
Or the tuneful nightingale
Charms the foreſt with her tale;
Come with all thy *various hues*,
Come and aid thy *ſiſter Muſe*;
Now while Phœbus riding high
Gives luſtre to the land and ſky!
Grongar Hill invites my ſong,
Draw the landſcape bright and ſtrong.

Dyer in general wrote with remarkable ſimplicity and clearneſs, but here is an inſtance in which his ſenſe is almoſt inexplicable. What fictitious Perſon is addreſſed by the appellation of *Silent Nymph*, it ſeems ſcarcely poſſible to diſcover. Painting, from the expreſſions *Siſter Muſe*, and *various hues*, might be meant; but why ſhould Painting be deſcribed

deſcribed as lying on the mountain's lonely van? Evening, as a proſopopoiea, could not be intended, for Evening cannot with any propriety be ſaid to *paint the form of things*. Fancy may be thought to have a better claim to the title, but to her, ſome of the above circumſtances are not applicable. That Fancy, however, was really deſigned, is a fact that can be fully aſcertained. Few readers are perhaps apprized that Grongar Hill was originally written, and even printed, as an irregular ode. There is a Miſcellany volume of poems, collected and publiſhed by the celebrated Richard Savage, in the year 1726, in which it appears in that form, very incorrect, and with the initial lines as follows:

FANCY, nymph that loves to lie
On the lonely eminence;
Darting notice through the eye,
Forming thought and feaſting ſenſe:

Thou that muſt lend imagination wings,
And ſtamp diſtinction on all worldly things,
Come, and with thy various hues,
Paint and adorn thy ſiſter muſe.

As the paſſage ſtands at preſent, there muſt be either a deſigned violent elipſis or accidental omiſſion of the particle *at*, in the ſecond line. It might be read thus:

Silent nymph with curious eye!
Who at purple evening lye———

The following paragraph rather deſtroys the unity of deſign, by dividing attention between *paſt* action, and *preſent*, of which laſt the principal part of the poem conſiſts. The image of the poet ſeated on a bank of flowers, by the ſide of a fountain, is nevertheleſs pretty, and has perhaps merit enough to juſtify its retention:

Grongar, in whoſe moſſy cells
Sweetly muſing quiet dwells;
Grongar in whoſe ſilent ſhade,
For the modeſt Muſes made,
So oft I *have*, the evening ſtill,
At the fountain of a rill,

Sat

Sat upon a flowery bed,
With my hand beneath my head;
While *ſtray'd* my eyes o'er Towy's flood,
Over mead and over wood,
From houſe to houſe, from hill to hill,
Till contemplation had her fill.

The author now agreeably deſcribes the circumſtance of aſcending a hill, with the conſequent gradual enlargement of the ſurrounding horizon. The trite ſimile of circles on water, is here happily applied. The compariſon of material with metaphorical eminence, *unhappy fate*, *&c.* interrupts the deſcription, and is not ſtrictly juſt; mountains ſinking in appearance from a ſpectator's change of ſituation, can have no real analogy with the degradation of a ſtateſman, hero, or other elevated character. The ideas in theſe couplets, '*Still the proſpect, wider, &c.*' are ſo extenſive, that they approach to the true ſublime:

About his chequer'd ſides I wind,
And leave his brooks and meads behind,
And groves and grottos where I lay,
And viſtas *ſhooting* beams of day:

Wide and wider ſpreads the *vale*;
Like circles on a ſmooth *canal:*
The mountains round, *unhappy fate*
Sooner or later of all height,
Withdraw their ſummits from the ſkies,
And leſſen as the others riſe:
Still the proſpect wider ſpreads,
Adds a thouſand woods and meads,
Still it widens, widens ſtill,
And ſinks the newly-riſen hill.

Some readers may think the followi alterations no improvement, but t arrangement is certainly preferable in point of correctneſs:

Wider and wider ſpreads the vale,
As circles on a ſmooth canal;
The mountains round that reach the ſkies
Subſide, and others o'er them riſe.
Still the proſpect, &c.

Had all the next paragraph except t firſt two lines, been ſuppreſſed, the poe would have ſuffered no material lo After the landſcape was ſaid to lye *belo* it was ſurely needleſs to ſay that it ſpre *beneath the ſight:* nor does the *face*

Natu

Nature, wearing the *hues* of the rainbow, convey to the mind any diſtinct or graphical idea:

Now I gain the mountain's brow,
What a landſcape lies *below!*
No clouds, no vapours intervene,
But the gay the open ſcene,
Does the *face* of Nature ſhow,
In all the *hues* of heaven's bow!
And ſwelling to embrace the light,
Spreads around *beneath the ſight.*

We have now a ſcene almoſt unexceptionably pictureſque and beautiful;

Old caſtles on the cliffs ariſe,
Proudly towering in the ſkies!
Ruſhing from the woods the ſpires,
Seem from hence aſcending fires!
Half his beams Apollo ſheds,
On the yellow mountain heads!
Gilds the fleeces of the flocks,
And glitters on the broken rocks!

The downward view of Grongar itſelf, has equal merit; the epithets of the different trees are well choſen:

Below me trees unnumber'd riſe,
Beautiful in various dyes;
The gloomy pine, the poplar blue,
The yellow beech, the ſable yew,
The ſlender fir that taper grows,
The ſturdy oak with broad-ſpread boughs.

This Poem has been celebrated for the frequency of its moral reflections. After deſcribing a ruined caſtle or palace, it was natural for ſuch ſentiments as the following to occur, but they might have been expreſſed with more conciſeneſs. The pen of expunction ſhould have paſſed over the words marked in italicks, as ſuperfluous; *rule* and *ſway* are ſynonymous; *pomp* and *ſway* would have done better. The concluſion, this little defect excepted, is truly excellent:

Yet time has ſeen, *that lifts the low,*
And level lays the lofty brow,
Has ſeen this *broken* pile compleat,
Big with the vanity of ſtate;
But tranſient is the ſmile of fate!
A little *rule*, a little *ſway*,
A ſun-beam in a winter's day,

Is

Is all the proud and mighty have,
Between the cradle and the grave.

The enſuing deſcription of the rivers is agreeable, and prettily illuſtrates the courſe of human life. The thought of *Nature's veſture*, is not ſo happy: her dreſs could not be at once grave and gay; and the ſame appearance which *inſtructs* or produces ſerious reflection, can ſcarcely divert or *diſperſe care*:

And ſee the rivers how they run,
Thro' woods and meads, in ſhade and ſun,
Sometimes ſwift, ſometimes ſlow,
Wave ſucceeding wave they go;
A various journey to the deep,
Like human life to endleſs ſleep!
Thus is Nature's *veſture wrought*,
To *inſtruct* our wand'ring thought;
Thus ſhe dreſſes green and *gay*,
To *diſperſe* our *cares* away.

Among the various component parts of a rural proſpect, few are more pleaſing than the diſpoſition of cultivated ground, the

the different dimenſions and form of the incloſures, and the different colours of their productions. Dyer's obſervant eye had not miſſed this appearance, and he has here introduced part of it, with the circumſtance of diminution, occaſioned by diſtance:

> See on the mountain's ſouthern ſide,
> *Where the proſpect opens wide,*
> Where the evening gilds the tide;
> How cloſe and ſmall the hedges lye!
> What ſtreaks of meadows croſs the eye!

The uſe of triplets arbitrarily introduced in couplet verſe, ſhould be ſparingly indulged. There can be no apology for it, but where the ſenſe is too extenſive for two lines, and not ſufficient for four. In the preſent inſtance, the ſecond line might have been omitted without diſadvantage; every reader muſt recollect the poets ſuppoſed ſituation,* and of courſe know that *the proſpect was*

* See page 102. ' Still the proſpect wider ſpreads, &c.'

wide.

wide. But this paragraph requires conſideration in another point of view:

> How cloſe and ſmall the hedges lie!
> What ſtreaks of meadows croſs the eye!
> A ſtep methinks may paſs the ſtream,
> So little diſtant dangers ſeem;
> *So we miſtake the future's face,*
> *Ey'd through hope's deluding glaſs;*
> *As* yon ſummits ſoft and fair,
> Clad in colours of the air,
> *Which* to thoſe who journey near,
> Barren, brown, and rough appear;
> Still we tread the ſame coarſe way,
> The preſent's ſtill a cloudy day.

By crouding too many thoughts together, writers often produce confuſion. Part of the above is uncommonly ambiguous. There is in it one couplet, which ſeems, Janus like, to look both ways; we know not whether to join it with thoſe which precede, or with thoſe that follow; and there is no punctuation that can determine the matter. The ſuppoſed narrowneſs of the ſtream very well

well illuſtrates the ſentiment, that danger in idea is diminiſhed in proportion to its diſtance; and that ſentiment is ſimply, forcibly, and fully expreſſed in one line:

So little diſtant dangers ſeem.

If to this verſe we add the two doubtful ones,

So we miſtake the future's face,
Ey'd through hope's deluding glaſs.

We have a ſuperfluous expatiation on the thought: Hope's glaſs, alſo to bear any relation to the natural circumſtance, muſt be an inverted teleſcope, wnich removes and leſſens the object. In this caſe the lines ſhould have cloſed the ſentence thus;

So we miſtake the future's face,
Ey'd through hope's deluding glaſs.

But here the context, by an improper introduction of the relative *which*, is rendered abſolute nonſenſe; 'As yon ſummits *which* appear brown and rough, 'ſtill we tread, &c.' But by ſubſtituting

ſtill

ſtill for *which*, we may obtain propriety of expreſſion, 'As yon ſummits ſoft 'and fair, *ſtill* when approached appear 'brown and rough, ſo ſtill we tread, &c.' This diſputable couplet will, however, on the other hand, connect as eaſily with its ſucceſſors:

> *So we miſtake the future's face,*
> *Ey'd through hope's deluding glaſs;*
> As yon ſummits ſoft and fair,
> Clad in colours of the air,
> Which to thoſe, &c.

This reading alſo, will give us grammatical conſtruction:—'We miſtake the future's 'face, as we miſtake yon ſummits, which 'are airy and beautiful when diſtant, 'but when near, brown and rough.' The thought in this paſſage is one that ſeems naturally to occur to the human mind: we feel the ſame kind of ſenſation when the eye views a delightful proſpect, as when the imagination contemplates ſuppoſed future happineſs: we think the place where we are, leſs pleaſant

pleaſant than the place we behold; we think the preſent hour leſs happy than the hours in expectation.

There is a remarkable ſprightlineſs in the movement of the verſes, in which the Poet exults in the enjoyment of his pleaſant ſituation:

Now, even now, my joys run high,
As on the mountain-turf I lie;
While the wanton zephyr ſings,
And in the vale perfumes his wings;
While the waters murmur deep;
While the ſhepherd charms his ſheep;
While the birds unbounded fly
And with muſic fill the ſky;
Now, even now, my joys run high.
Be full ye courts, be great who will,
Search for peace with all your ſkill:
Open wide the lofty door,
Seek her on the marble floor;
In vain you ſearch, ſhe is not there;
In vain ye ſearch the domes of care!

Grongar-Hill, had Dyer written nothing elſe, would have obtained for him the name

name of a poet; nevertheleſs, it is the ſmalleſt proof of his abilities. The Ruins of Rome, and the Fleece, however neglected by ſuperficial readers, or degraded by injudicious criticks, juſtly intitle him to the higheſt praiſe.

Since the above was written, the Author has ſeen a very ingenious Work,* in which this Poem has obtained conſiderable notice. Dyer is there conſidered as a landſcape painter, painting with words inſtead of colours; and is pronounced defective in his execution, as wanting contraſt of foreground and diſtance. It is juſtly obſerved, that the objects immediately beneath his eye, and thoſe more remote, are marked with equal ſtrength and diſtinctneſs; the trees cloſe at hand, are diſtinguiſhed by their *ſhapes* and *hues*, and the caſtle afar off, by *ivy* creeping on its walls. Where the deſcriber is ſuppoſed to ſtand, the

* OBSERVATIONS on the RIVER WYE, by Mr. GILPIN.

former

former muſt be viſible, the latter could not; and therefore ſhould not have been mentioned. When a man propoſes much, and fails of doing it, he diſcovers inability or negligence; when he profeſſes nothing, and does little, we may wiſh he had done more, but we ſhould not eſtimate his powers by his performance. Dyer's Poem ſeems deſignedly without plan; it is deſultory and diffuſe, ſketching at random a number of unconnected objects. His hill's extenſive view would probably have afforded *ſeveral* complete landſcapes, but it is not clear that he aimed at producing *any*.

ESSAY

ESSAY V.

On Dyer's Ruins of Rome.

FICTIOUS or imaginary ſcenes or actions, deſcribed or narrated in verſe, have always been held in high eſtimation. But as fiction is allowed to increaſe in value, in proportion as it reſembles truth, it will of courſe follow, that truth itſelf, deſcribed or narrated in like manner, muſt be moſt of all valuable. Fiction and truth are ſometimes equally ſuſceptible of poetical ornament, and if both be equally adorned, ſurely no man

can heſitate a moment to determine which is preferable.

The Deſcriptive Poem in general has concern only with truth, that is to ſay, with a real place or ſituation, of more or leſs importance. The Poem now under conſideration, peculiarly fortunate in its choice, has for its ſubject the actual remains of the firſt city in the univerſe: a ſubject whoſe grandeur it muſt be needleſs, and indeed difficult, to exaggerate; whoſe hiſtory could not fail to intereſt, and whoſe moral muſt inſtruct; a ſubject affording pictures of paſt and preſent magnificence, narration of the riſe and fall of empire, applauſe of liberty and virtue, and cenſure of tyranny and vice. But even ſuch a ſubject in the hands of a Denham, or a Garth, would have become a Cooper's-Hill, or a Claremont; would have been degraded with proſaiſms, and obſcured with metaphors, encumbered with heterogeneous digreſſions, and

and perplexed with conceits and quibbles.* What Dyer has made of it is now to be ſhewn.

V. 1. Enough of Grongar, and the ſhady dales
Of winding Towy, Merlin's fabled haunt,
I ſung inglorious. Now the love of arts,
And what in metal or in ſtone remains
Of proud antiquity, through various realms
And various languages and ages fam'd,
Bears me remote, o'er Gallia's woody bounds,
O'er the cloud-piercing Alps remote; beyond
The vale of Arno purpled with the vine,
Beyond the Umbrian and Etruſcan hills,
To Latium's wide champaign forlorn and waſte,
Where yellow Tiber his neglected wave
Mournfully rolls. Yet once again my muſe,
Yet once again, and ſoar a loftier flight;
Lo the reſiſtleſs theme, imperial Rome.

* BELLAY'S RUINS of ROME, mentioned page 12, of theſe ESSAYS, is a work of ſome merit, but deſerves part of the above character. DYER has borrowed nothing from it; he had no occaſion, he copied a better original, he painted immediately from nature.

The typographical marks, by which reading is aſſiſted, are not ſo numerous in our language, as to juſtify us in parting with any of them. The crotchets, formerly appropriated to point out a ſuſpenſion of ſenſe, and comprize words that may be omitted, are now moſtly diſuſed: this alteration in the mode of printing, though it may pleaſe the eye, by no means contributes to perſpicuity. The ſecond period of the above paſſage, from a conſiderable part of it being parenthetical, and yet not marked as a parentheſis, becomes rather obſcure. The reader does not immediately determine the author's meaning, viz. that 'the 'love of the arts, and of the remains of 'antiquity, renowned in various realms, 'languages, and ages, *bears the poet* '*remote*;' but is almoſt ready to ſuppoſe that 'the love of arts, and of the 'remains of antiquity, *bears him through* '*various realms, languages, and ages.*' The metonymy, by which we are accuſtomed

tomed to find *languages* ſubſtituted for *people*, countenances the miſtake; and it is the word *ages* alone, which in ſuch a connection would produce nonſenſe, that precludes the ambiguity.

The idea of progreſſion given by the Poet's ſpecification of the places paſſed through, is very forcible, and the epithets beſtowed on thoſe places are ſtrongly diſcriminative of their peculiarities; the *woody bounds* of Gallia, the *cloud-piercing* Alps, the *viney vale* of Arno, and the *forlorn waſte* of the Campagna. Pope, in his Dunciad, has a paſſage of this ſpecies, moſt poetically imagined and expreſſed: that ludicrous poem is ſcarcely place good enough for lines ſo beautifully deſcriptive and ſweetly melodious: there are, indeed, few in our language that excel them. The travelling Governor leads his Pupil, on the grand tour,

To where the Seine obſequious as ſhe runs,
Pours at great Bourbon's feet her ſilken ſons;
Or Tyber, now no longer Roman rolls,
Vain of Italian arts, Italian ſouls:
To happy convents boſom'd deep in *vines*,
Where ſlumber abbots purple as their *wines*:
To iſles of fragrance, lilly-ſilver'd vales,
Diffuſing languor in the panting gales:
To lands of ſinging, and of dancing ſlaves,
Love-whiſp'ring woods, and lute-reſounding waves, &c.

But to return to Dyer,

V. 16. Fallen, fallen, a ſilent heap; her heroes all
Sunk in their urns; behold the pride of pomp,
The throne of nations fallen; obſcur'd in duſt;
Even yet majeſtical: the ſolemn ſcene
Elates the ſoul, which now the riſing ſun
Flames on the ruins in the purer air
Towering aloft, upon the glittering plain,
Like broken rocks, a vaſt circumference;
Rent palaces, cruſh'd columns, *rifled moles*,
Fanes roll'd on fanes, and tombs on buried tombs.

That poetical power which can bear the reader to 'Thebes, to Athens, when it 'will, and where,' has perhaps been ſeldom more ſtrongly exemplified than in this paſſage: no hiſtorical account that the

the Author of theſe remarks has read, nor any picture that he has ſeen, ever conveyed to his mind ſo extenſive and diſtinct an idea of a general view of magnificent ruins.

V. 26. Deep lies in duſt the Theban obeliſk
Immenſe along the waſte; minuter art
Glyconian forms or Phidian, ſubtlely fair,
O'erwhelming; as the immenſe LEVIATHAN
The finny brood, when near Ierne's ſhore
Out-ſtretch'd, unweildy, his iſland length appears
Above the foamy flood.———

Poets have been credited with much merit for the uſe of the ſimile. Where there is a real reſemblance between the objects compared, and the idea of the principal ſubject is not weakened or confuſed by ſuperfluous circumſtances in the compariſon, ſimilies have moſtly a good effect. Dyer has not been profuſe of this ornament, but he has generally introduced it to advantage. The difference of ſize between a large obeliſk and a ſmall ſtatue, is well illuſtrated by the '*Leviathan* and *finny brood*,' in the

foregoing. The laſt line but one, '*Outſtretch'd, unwieldy, &c.*' ſeems to have been deſigned as an inſtance of that beauty which is perhaps too often imaginary, and is ſuppoſed to conſiſt in the ſound forming a kind of echo, or rather bearing ſome analogy to the ſenſe. The dactylar pronunciation by which three ſyllables muſt be contracted to two, 'unwiel*dy his iſ*land,' in order to preſerve the melody of the verſe, does not appear to convey any thing peculiarly expreſſive of material magnitude, though the ideas affixed to the words certainly do.

V. 38. ——————The pilgrim oft
At dead of night, 'mid his oraiſon hears
Aghaſt the voice of Time, diſparting tow'rs,
Tumbling all precipitate down-daſh'd,
Rattling around, loud-thundering to the moon;
While murmurs ſooth each awful interval
Of ever-falling waters; ſhrouded Nile
Eridanus, and Tiber with his twins,
And palmy Euphrates; they with dropping locks,

Hang

Hang o'er their urns, and mournfully among
The plaintive-echoing ruins pour their
ſtreams.

Dr. Johnſon, whoſe parſimony of praiſe to his cotemporaries, eſpecially to our author, is but too conſpicuous, juſt deigns to obſerve, that "ſome paſſages in "this poem are conceived with the "mind of a poet," and contents himſelf with quoting the beginning of the above, as a ſpecimen. He was not however the firſt perſon who diſcovered its merit, for Hervey in his Meditations had previouſly applauded it. The introduction of the pilgrim hearing the noiſe of the falling towers, is a beautiful circumſtance, and affects us much more forcibly than a ſimple aſſertion that they often fell. The fourth line, '*Tumbling all*, &c.' has not the ſtructure of any Engliſh verſe, conſequently has no melody, but it is a better echo to its ſenſe than that before-mentioned: it indeed repreſents, as far as the ſound

of

of words can do it, the thing deſigned to be repreſented.

Poets who poſſeſs a good ear, when their ſubject requires the uſe of a rough verſification, take care as ſoon as poſſible to relieve the reader, by introducing lines of a more muſical ſtructure. Our author in the preſent inſtance has not been inattentive to this circumſtance. His '*Tumbling all precipitate;*' '*Rat-*' *ling around, &c.*' are finely ſucceeded and contraſted by the ſofter ſtrain, '*While murmurs ſooth,* &c.'

The ninth verſe, '*And palmy Euphrà-*' *tes, &c.*' may by ſome perſons be thought harſh, but if it be read properly it is not: the accent muſt be ſunk in the ſecond ſyllable of pal*my*, and thrown ſtrong on the ſecond of Eu*phrà*-tes. Milton has many verſes of this ſort, where one vowel ends a word, and another begins the next, and both are connected

connected in pronunciation, ſo as to deſtroy the hiatus:

> Of *glory obſcur'd*, as when the ſun new riſen—
> —And temperate vapours bland which *the only* ſound—

He has others of a different conſtruction, in which even the intervention of a conſonant does not deſtroy the melody:

> And where the *river of* bliſs through mid'ſt of heav'n,—
> With thoſe that never fade, the *ſpirits elect*.—

There is a very bold tranſpoſition in the preceding paſſage:

> While *murmurs* ſooth each awful interval
> *Of ever-falling waters*.———

A ſuperficial reader not attending to the ſenſe of the epithet *ever*, might be ready to ſuppoſe that the *intervals* intended, were thoſe *between* the *falling of the waters*, inſtead of thoſe *between the falling of the towers*. There is in this

this paſſage another ſmall blemiſh; the ſtatues that adorn the fountains, are confuſed with the ſtreams which they diſembogue: this might have been prevented by a very trifling alteration:

> Of ever-falling waters. Shrouded Nile,
> Eridanus and Tiber with his twins,
> And palmy Euphrates; all with dropping locks
> Hang o'er their urns.———

Among the many ſubjects which Dyer has deſcribed with the mind of a poet, the following is not the leaſt conſpicuous. The energetick expreſſion, '*Breathing forth darkneſs*,' had it been found in Shakeſpeare, or ſome other popular author, would never have been ſufficiently applauded:

> V. 52. ——————————I raiſe
> The toilſome ſtep up the proud palatine,
> Through ſpicy cypreſs groves, and towering pine,
> Waving aloft o'er the big ruins brows,
> On numerous arches rear'd: and frequent ſtop'd,

The

The ſunk ground ſtartles me with dreadful chaſm,
Breathing forth darkneſs from the vaſt profound
Of iſles and halls within the mountain's womb.

The common ſewers of a city might ſeem a ſubject of no great dignity; the common ſewers of Rome, however, derived importance from their extenſive plan, and enormous magnitude; and in our Poet's deſcription, that importance has ſuffered no diminution. In the hands of a common writer, they would have been made ridiculous, either with bombaſt or meanneſs:

V. 60. Nor theſe the nether works; all theſe beneath,
And all beneath the hills and vales around,
Extend the cavern'd ſewers———
Whither the great Tarquinian genius dooms
Each wave impure; and *proud* with added rains,
Hark how the *mighty billows laſh their vaults*,
And *thunder*; how they *heave their rocks in vain!*

Though

Though now inceſſant time has roll'd around
A thouſand winters o'er the changeful world,
And yet a thouſand ſince, th' *indignant floods*
Roar loud in their firm bounds, and *daſh* and
ſwell,
In vain; convey'd to Tiber's loweſt wave.

The tumultuous efforts of the ſubterraneous waters againſt their containing channels, it may be thought are here inſiſted on with too much repetition; and poſſibly the expreſſion of '*heaving their* '*rocks*,' may be deemed too bold; but perhaps the reiterations are rather pleonaſtical, than periſſological; and if the paſſage is not defenſible, as thoroughly correct, it is at leaſt truly poetical.

No place but Rome could have produced ſuch a ſcene as the following, and a pen like Thomſon's, or Dyer's, could alone have given it with ſuch force to the reader:

V. 74. Hence over airy plains, by chryſtal founts,
That weave their glittering waves with tuneful lapſe,
Among the ſleeky pebbles, agate clear,
Cerulean ophite, and the flowery vein
Of orient jaſper, pleas'd I move along,
And vaſes boſs'd, and huge inſcriptive ſtones,
And intermingling vines, and figur'd nymphs,
Flora's and Chloe's of delicious mould,
Chearing the *darkneſs*;* and deep empty tombs,
And dells, and mould'ring ſhrines, with old decay
Ruſtick and green, and wide embowring ſhades,
Shot from the crooked clefts of nodding towr's,
A ſolemn wilderneſs!———

The Poet then conducts us through ſcenes, where

———————On each hand
Hiſtoric urns and breathing ſtatues riſe,
And ſpeaking buſts!———

* The Author ſeems to be deſcribing an airy open ſituation, with which this idea of *darkneſs* is incongruous. Repeated examinations, previous to publication, are neceſſary to prevent ſuch little inaccuracies.

From

From theſe he takes occaſion to introduce ſome ſhort, but forcible deſcriptions of character:

———————The ſpirit ſtirring form
Of Cæſar raptur'd with the charm of rule
And boundleſs fame, impatient for exploits,
His eager eyes upcaſt, he ſoars in thought
Above all height.———

——Deſponding Brutus, dubious of the right,
In evil days, of faith and public weal,
Solicitous and ſad.———

——Tully's graceful attitude; uprais'd,
With out-ſtretch'd arm he waves in act to ſpeak
Before the ſilent maſters of the world—

Theſe are ſucceeded by a number of hiſtorical circumſtances, which might have been introduced with more judgment, and to greater advantage, in the account of the origin and advance of Rome, towards the end of the Poem.

This Piece conſiſts principally in deſcription of progreſs and proſpect. We have

have attended the author in his aſcent of the Mons Palatinus, and muſt now proceed with him to view from its top, the ſublime remnants of antiquity:

V. 133. ——————Now the brow
We gain enraptured; beauteouſly diſtinct
The num'rous porticos and domes upſwell,
With obeliſks and columns interpos'd,
And pine, and fir, and oak: ſo fair a ſcene
Sees not the derviſe from the ſpiral tomb
Of ancient Chamnos, while his eye beholds
Proud Memphis reliques o'er the Egyptian plain:
Nor hoary hermit from Hymettus brow,
Though graceful Athens in the vale beneath,
Along the windings of the muſe's ſtream,
Lucid Ilyſſus, weeps her ſilent ſchools,
And groves unviſited by bard or ſage.

In the preceeding Eſſay on Pope's Windſor Foreſt, it was intimated that the illuſtration of local deſcription by local ſimile, is not often ſucceſsful. The remark however muſt not be indiſcriminately adopted, but will admit of ſome qualification. To attempt to enhance the importance of

one place, by comparing it with another, to which it cannot bear the moſt remote ſimilitude, as in the above-mentioned Poem, Windſor with Eden and Olympus, is abſurd; but to endeavour to enhance the importance of one place, by comparing it to another of the ſame general character, as here in the caſe of two ruinated cities, is rational and frequently advantageous. This practice alſo, by preſenting to the reader's mind a new, yet congruous, group of imagery, adds greatly to his pleaſure. The above quotation is in this view eminently beautiful; the derviſe ſurveying the ruins of Memphis, is a fine natural image, and Athens weeping by the ſide of Ilyſſus, over her deſerted ſchools, is a noble proſopopoiea.

V. 146. Amid the tow'ry ruins, huge, ſupreme,
The *enormous* amphitheatre behold,
Mountainous pile! o'er whoſe *capacious womb*
Pours the broad firmament its varied light;
While from the central floor the ſeats aſcend
Round

Round above round, ſlow-widening to the verge,
A circuit vaſt and high: nor leſs had held
Imperial Rome, and her attendant realms,
When drunk with rule, ſhe will'd the fierce delight,
And op'd the gloomy caverns, whence out-ruſh'd,
Before th' innumerable ſhouting croud,
The fiery madded tyrants of the wilds,
Lions and tygers, wolves and elephants,
And deſperate men more fell. Abhor'd intent!
By *frequent* converſe with *familiar* death,
To kindle brutal daring apt for war;
To *lock* the *breaſt*, and *ſteel* the *obdurate* heart,
Amid the piercing cries of ſore diſtreſs
Impenetrable.

The pencil of a painter could not have given a more diſtinct and graphical picture of an amphitheatre, than we find in the fifth, ſixth, and ſeventh lines of the above, '*While from the central floor, &c.*' The author's cenſure of the entertainments, to a reader of ſenſibility, will need no recommendation. The language in

this paſſage might have been improved by compreſſion; ſome of the epithets, &c. marked in italicks, might have been omitted without injury, though, as was obſerved in a former caſe,|| they are rather pleonaſms than periſſologies.

Several poets have taken occaſion to mention the Pantheon: Pope and Akenſide, as Dr. Warton obſerves, have both introduced it as a ſimile, the latter with great dignity and propriety. Dyer deſcribes it as a ſubject, but I think his deſcription is not one of his moſt ſhining paſſages. When this celebrated edifice is compared to the world, the compariſon is not appoſite; the Pantheon is a cylinder, terminating in a dome,* but the world or earth is nearly ſpherical. The inſtructions to the architect to take it for his model, are not conveyed in the moſt animated ſtrain, though they are far from being degraded by meanneſs:

|| See page 126.

* SMOLLET degradingly calls it a huge cockpit. V. 180.

V. 180. Pantheon plain and round; of this our world
Majeſtic emblem; with peculiar grace
Before its ample orb, projected ſtands
The many-pillar'd portal; nobleſt work
Of human ſkill; here curious architect,
If thou eſſay'ſt, ambitious to ſurpaſs
Palladius, Angelus, or Britiſh Jones,
On theſe fair walls extend the certain ſcale,
And turn the inſtructive compaſs.——

The origin of the Corinthian Order is finely imagined in the following:

V. 193. ——————Fair Corinth firſt
Boaſted their order which Callimachus,
(Reclining ſtudious on Aſopus banks,
Beneath an urn of ſome lamented nymph)
Haply compos'd; the urn with foliage curl'd
Thinly conceal'd the *chapiter inform'd.*

The Poet here probably meant, that the urn thinly concealed with foliage, was a pattern for the capital of the column; but he has not either pleaſingly or clearly conveyed this ſenſe, by ſaying that it *informed* the chapiter.

V. 199. See the tall obeliſks from Memphis old,
One ſtone enormous each, or Thebes convey'd;
Like Albion's ſpires they ruſh into the ſkies.

Blank verſe has been accuſed, and perhaps too juſtly, of obſcurity; and much of this obſcurity ariſes from inattention to a proper arrangement. Where the natural order of the words would be equally ſtrong, as in the preſent inſtance, tranſpoſition ſhould not be wantonly indulged:

——————From Memphis old
Or Thebes convey'd, one ſtone enormous each.——

The ſight of the Temple of Concord, where the ſenate met on occaſion of Cataline's conſpiracy, naturally produced recollection of that circumſtance, and afforded a fine picture. The vehement orator pouring perſuaſion, could not have addreſſed his audience with more ſpirited

dom, which teaches Toil to clothe the fields, and inſcribes the name of Property on their produce;

V. 230. Ineſtimable good! who giv'ſt us Truth,
Whoſe hand upleads to light, divineſt Truth
Array'd in every charm: whoſe hand benign
Teaches unwearied Toil to cloathe the fields,
And on his various fruits inſcribes the name
Of Property,————

Returning now to Rome, the Poet proceeds with his praiſe of Liberty, attributing to her influence the production of the ancient works of magnificence and utility. Had regularity of plan been conſulted, this part of the poem would have been transferred nearer to the cloſe; but wherever it is placed, its poetical merit muſt make it pleaſe;

V. 252. ————————Thy hand benign
Rear'd up her tow'ry battlements in ſtrength;
Bent her wide bridges o'er the ſwelling ſtream
Of Tuſcan Tyber; thine thoſe ſolemn domes
Devoted to the voice of humble prayer;

And

And thine thoſe piles undeck'd, capacious, vaſt,*
In days of dearth where tender charity
Diſpens'd her timely ſuccours to the poor.
Thine too thoſe muſically falling founts,
To ſlake the clammy lip; adown they fall
Muſical ever; while from yon blue hills
Dim in the clouds, the radiant aqueducts
Turn their innumerable arches o'er
The ſpacious deſarts, bright'ning in the ſun,
Proud and more proud in their auguſt approach:
High o'er irriguous vales, and woods, and towns,
Glide the ſoft-whiſpering waters in the wind,
And here united pour their ſilver ſtreams
Among the figur'd rocks in murm'ring falls
Muſical ever.———

There are few poets whoſe works will afford a picture equal in grandeur to this of the aqueducts commencing at the diſtant hills, turning their arches over the ſpacious deſert, and terminating in the fountains of Rome. The lines in italicks, however beautiful in themſelves,

* The public granaries.

would

would have been ſuppreſſed by a writer who piqued himſelf in avoiding redundance; becauſe the ſame thought afterwards occurs again. A very ingenious gentleman, I remember, once objected to the expreſſion, '*Muſical ever*,' as an inſtance in which muſical ſound was not exemplified. Theſe niceties are much dependant on the different taſte of individuals, and to my ear the expreſſion does not ſeem unharmonious.

The proſpect which had been interrupted by the preceeding digreſſion, is now reſumed. A landſcape however grand or beautiful, derives additional grandeur or beauty from population. The Poet could not by any other means have given ſo ſublime an idea of the ancient Roman roads, as by recalling to our memory the crouds which once frequented them:

V. 279. And ſee from every gate theſe ancient roads,
With tombs high-verg'd, the ſolemn paths of fame;
Deſerve they not regard; o'er whoſe broad flints
Such crouds have roll'd, ſo many ſtorms of war,
So many pomps, ſo many wond'ring realms?
Yet ſtill through mountains pierc'd, o'er vallies rais'd,
In even ſtate to diſtant ſeas around,
They ſtretch their pavements.—

There are Works called poems, from which it is matter of difficulty to ſelect one poetical quotation: the Poem under conſideration ſo abounds with pleaſing imagery, that the taſk of ſelection is perplexing. Much of it has been already tranſcribed, and among the paſſages omitted, are ſeveral not at all inferior. Nothing can be more graphical than the following deſcription of the Temple of Peace in ruins, the *three nodding iſles*, the *heap of ſand* and *weeds*, &c. Nothing can be more ſtriking

ing than the contraſt produced by expatiation on its former ſplendor:

V. 286. ——————Lo the fane of Peace,
Built by that prince who to the truſt of power
Was honeſt, the delight of human kind.
Three nodding iſles remain; the reſt an heap
Of ſand and weeds; her ſhrines, her radiant roofs,
And columns proud, that from her ſpacious floor,
As from a ſhining ſea majeſtic roſe
An hundred foot aloft, like ſtately beech
Around the brim of Dion's glaſſy lake
Charming the mimick painter: on the walls
Hung Salem's ſacred piles; the golden board
And golden trumpets, now conceal'd, entomb'd
By the ſunk roof.——————

Dyer was a painter, and knew the effect of adding to a principal figure a proper back ground; he has availed himſelf of this advantage in the preſent inſtance. Over the ſunk roof,

——————In diſtant view
The Etruſcan mountains ſwell, with ruins crown'd
Of ancient towns; and blue Soracte ſpires
Wrapping his ſides in tempeſts.——

The deſign of this Criticiſm is not to conceal the inaccuracies even of a favourite author. The above quotation has one fault, which might have been avoided, by omitting the laſt hemiſtick. However ſublime the image, of the mountain *wrapt in tempeſts*, it is here miſplaced, for what was *wrapt in tempeſts*, could not be ſeen. The natural object, blue Soracte, is alſo confounded with the proſopopoiea, indicated by the act of *wrapping*, and by the perſonal pronoun *his*.

If the following ſimile and deſcription are not truly poetical, it is difficult to ſay what can have a right to that epithet:

V. 313.

V. 313. Theſe, and unnumber'd, yet their brows uplift,
Rent * of their graces; as Britannia's oaks
On Merlin's mounts, or Snowdon's rugged ſides,
Stand in the clouds their branches ſcatter'd round,
After the tempeſt; Mauſoleums, Cirques,
Naumachias, Forums, Trajan's column tall.

Moral ſentiment, as an ingenious Critick has obſerved, is the cheapeſt product of the human mind. There are few perſons to whom it does not occur, but there are very few who can introduce it with eaſe, and expreſs it with elegance. Scarce any writer has been happier in this reſpect than our Poet:

V. 333. ——————— Behold that heap
Of mould'ring urns (their aſhes blown away
Duſt of the mighty) the ſame ſtory † tell;
And at its baſe, from whence the ſerpent glides
Down the green deſert ſtreet, yon hoary monk

* Perhaps a miſprint for *reſt*.
† The viciſſitudes of human greatneſs.

Laments

Laments the ſame, the *viſion* as he views,
The ſolitary, ſilent, ſolemn, ſcene,
Where Cæſars, heroes, peaſants, hermits lie,
Blended in *duſt* together; where the ſlave
Reſts from his labours; where th' inſulting proud
Reſigns his power; the miſer drops his hoard;
Where human folly ſleeps.———

Authors are often accuſed of borrowing from works which they have never ſeen: but Dyer's poems had undoubtedly been read by Akenſide, and the circumſtance of the *ſerpent gliding among the ruins*, though natural, is not ſo obvious as to be likely to preſent itſelf to both writers. However if Dyer's ſublime picture was copied by Akenſide, it was copied nobly and freely; the original is finely varied in the imitation:

———Deſolation o'er the graſs-grown ſtreet
Expands her raven wings, and from the gate
Where ſenates once the weal of nations plann'd,
Hiſſes the gliding ſnake through hoary weeds,
That claſp the mould'ring column.—
PLEASURES of IMAGINATION, B. II. l. 680.

Pope's

Pope's ſtriking reflection in his Windſor Foreſt, line 315, is here finely expanded by Dyer, and is a ſtriking inſtance how two genuine poets may expreſs the ſame ideas with great difference, yet with equal beauty:

——————Where e'en the great find reſt,
And blended lie the oppreſſor and the oppreſs'd. POPE.

Where Cæſars, heroes, peaſants, hermits lie
Blended in duſt together, &c. DYER.

V. 344.——————There is a mood,
(I ſing not to the vacant and the young)
There is a kindly mood of melancholy,
That wings the ſoul, and points her to the ſkies;
When tribulation clothes the child of man,
When age deſcends with ſorrow to the grave,
'Tis ſweetly-ſoothing ſympathy to pain,
A gently-wak'ning call to health and eaſe.
How muſical! when *all-devouring* Time,
Here ſitting on his throne of ruins hoar,
While *winds* and *tempeſts* ſweep his various lyre,
How ſweet thy diapaſon Melancholy!

The ſight of magnificent ruins, with the ſolemn noiſe produced by the wind paſſing through them, could not fail to affect a ſerious mind in the manner deſcribed in the above quotation,* and on the laſt circumſtance our poet has raiſed the noble proſopopoiea, of Time ſitting on a throne with a lyre. This proſopopoiea however, might perhaps have been placed to greater advantage at the beginning of the paſſage, as the ſcenery and the ſound would then have been regularly combined in exciting the "*kindly mood of melancholy.*" The following variation may juſt ſerve to explain my meaning:

* The power of ſounds, in affecting the human mind, and, in conformity to their different nature, elevating or depreſſing it, is univerſally acknowledged. The author of theſe obſervations has repeatedly experienced it. By attention to ſolemn muſick, particularly that of bells heard at a diſtance, he has found his thoughts firſt regulated to a pleaſing calm, then employed on a variety of ſerious and pathetick images, and at length oppreſſed in a manner that became painful.

Here

——————Here hoary Time
Sits on his throne of ruins; while the wind
Sweeps o'er his various lyre, how musical,
How ſweet the diapaſon: Melancholy
Spreads o'er the ſoul her mood; that kindly mood
Which calms the thought, and lifts it to the ſkies.
When tribulation clothes the child of man,
When age deſcends with ſorrow to the grave;
'Tis ſweetly-ſoothing ſympathy to pain,
A gently-wak'ning call to health and eaſe.

By this means alſo ſome minute inaccuracies are avoided, as the epithet *all-devouring*, which does not fit the place, and the mention of *tempeſts*, which after the mention of *winds*, is ſuperfluous, and is beſides incongruous with the calm ſolemnity of the ſcene. '*Tribulation clothing the child of man*,' is a fine orientaliſm.

The Poet's view of his proſpect, is ſuppoſed to employ the duration of a natural day: it begins when

——————The riſing ſun
Flames on the ruins in the purer air,
Towering aloft.——

It now tends to a concluſion:

Cool evening comes, the ſetting ſun diſplays
His viſible great round between two tow'rs,
As through two ſhady cliffs.——

This grand natural appearance of the ſun ſetting between two towers, or rocks, had not eſcaped the Author of the Pleaſures of Imagination. The cliffs which Dyer introduced as a ſimile, Akenſide introduces as a ſubject:

——————Now the weſtern ſun reveal'd
Between two parting cliffs his golden orb,
And pour'd acroſs the ſhadow of the hills,
On rocks and floods a yellow ſtream of light
That chear'd the ſolemn ſcene.

The following extract demands in every reſpect unabated approbation; it is like a fine tune, which will bear a tenth, or a twentieth repetition, without becoming

becoming tedious. With what pleaſure does the poet ſeem to exult in recollection of the former reſpectable ſtate of poets! with what feeling and what energy does he complain of that modern neglect, of which many, and none more than himſelf, have had occaſion to complain!

V. 369. Suffice it now th'Eſquilian mount to reach,
With weary wing, and ſeek the ſacred reſts
Of Maro's humble tenement; a low
Plain wall remains; a little ſun-gilt heap
Groteſque and wild; the gourd and olive brown
Weave the light roof; the gourd and olive fan,
Their am'rous foliage, mingling with the vine,
Who drops her purple cluſters through the green.
Here let me lie, with pleaſing fancy ſooth'd:
Here flow'd his fountain; here his laurels grew;
Here oft the meek good man, the lofty bard
Fram'd the celeſtial ſong; or ſocial walk'd
With Horace and the ruler of the world:

Happy Auguſtus! who ſo well inſpir'd,
Couldſt throw thy pomps and royalties aſide,
Attentive to the wiſe, the great of ſoul,
And dignify thy mind. Thrice glorious days
Auſpicious to the Muſes! then rever'd,
Then hallow'd was the fount, or ſecret ſhade,
Or open mountain, or whatever ſcene
The Poet choſe to tune the ennobling rhyme
Melodious; ev'n the rugged ſons of war,
Ev'n the rude hinds rever'd the Poet's name:
But now,—another age alas! is ours.—
Yet will the Muſe a little longer ſoar,
Unleſs the clouds of care weigh down her wing,
Since nature's ſtores are ſhut with cruel hand,
And each aggrieves his brother; ſince in vain
The thirſty pilgrim at the fountain aſks
The o'erflowing wave.—Enough—the plaint diſdain.—

The length of this Poem, and its ſuperior merit, have hitherto cauſed it to engroſs a conſiderable ſhare of attention. The remaining part is of the ſame general character, and relates, in a ſpirited narrative, the riſe, meridian, decline, and fall of the Roman Empire. The

conclu-

concluſion deſcribes in the moſt animated manner the irruption of the Goths and Vandals, with their conſequences; and reflects with equal dignity and pathos on the fatal effects of national luxury.

V. 526. But ſee along the north the tempeſt ſwell
O'er the rough Alps, and darken all their ſnows!
Sudden the Goth and Vandal, dreaded names,
Ruſh as the breach of waters, whelming all
Their domes, their villas; down the feſtive piles,
Down fall their Parian porches, gilded baths,
And roll before the ſtorm in clouds of duſt.

Vain end of human ſtrength, of human ſkill,
Conqueſt, and triumph, and domain, and pomp,
And eaſe and luxury! O luxury,
Bane of elated life, of affluent ſtates,
What dreary change, what ruin is not thine?
How doth thy bowl intoxicate the mind!
To the ſoft entrance of thy roſy cave,
How doſt thou lure the fortunate and great!
Dreadful attraction! while behind thee gapes
The unfathomable gulph, where Aſhur lies

O'erwhelm'd, forgotten; and high boasting Cham,
And Elam's haughty pomp; and beauteous Greece,
And the great queen of earth, imperial ROME.

ESSAY

ESSAY VI.

On COLLINS's ORIENTAL ECLOGUES

BY thoſe, with whom the bulk of an author's performance is the criterion for eſtimating his merit, Collins, will be deemed a minor poet; there are however volumes of verſes of no mean character, which contain leſs genuine poetry, than the few pages he produced. The Oriental Eclogues were always till lately poſſeſſed of conſiderable reputation, but our celebrated Biographer * having hinted that Collins, once in converſation

* DR. JOHNSON.

tion with a friend, happened to term them his *Iriſh* Eclogues, thoſe who form opinions not from their own reaſon, or their own feelings, but from the hints of others, have caught the hint, and circulated it. That Collins ever ſuppoſed his Eclogues deſtitute of merit, there is no reaſon to believe; but it is very probable, when his judgment was improved by experience, he might diſcover, and be hurt by their faults, among which may poſſibly be found ſome few inſtances of inconſiſtence or abſurdity.

The Oriental Eclogues, nevertheleſs, however they may be depreciated, have all the requiſites of a good poem, deſcription, incident, ſentiment, and moral; they have ſimplicity of thought, and melody of language.

The firſt is intitled Selim, or The Shepherd's Moral. It introduces a Perſian poet

poet on the bank of the Tigris, expatiating to a female audience, on the praiſe of virtue. The Author in this piece is not a cold teacher of morality; there is an ardour in his compoſition, which induces one to think him not intirely unintereſted in the leſſon he is giving. Perhaps in the character of his Selim, he was obliquely adviſing ſome lady, whoſe perſon had attracted his affections, but whoſe conduct could not merit his eſteem. This is mere conjecture, and may appear fanciful; nevertheleſs, the late ingenious Dr. Langhorne ſeems rather miſtaken, when he obſerves, that Collins was one of the few poets who have ſailed to Delphi, without touching at Cythera. Our Poet poſſeſſed a mind that could not be inſenſible to the fair; and his compoſitions diſcover much of the tender, though nothing of the licentious.

This

This Eclogue is very incorrect; it is in that reſpect the worſt of the four.

V. 1. Ye Perſian maids attend your poet's lays,
And hear how ſhepherds paſs their golden days;
Not all are bleſt whom fortune's hand ſuſtains
With wealth in courts, nor all that haunt the plains:
Well may your hearts believe the truth I tell,
'Tis virtue makes the bliſs where e'er we dwell.

Thus Selim ſung, by ſacred truth inſpir'd;
Nor praiſe, but ſuch as truth beſtow'd, deſir'd:
Wiſe in himſelf, his meaning ſongs convey'd
Informing morals to the ſhepherd maid;
Or taught the ſwains that ſureſt bliſs to find,
What groves nor ſtreams beſtow, a virtuous mind.

The poet who propoſes a ſubject, ſhould always endeavour to diſcuſs it. The Perſian maids are here called on to '*hear* '*how ſhepherds paſs their golden days,*' but how thoſe days are paſſed, they are not told: from ſuch an introduction, ſome deſcription or narration of rural life might be expected in the ſubſe-

quent

quent part of the piece; but none ſuch appears. This introduction alſo, has no proper relation to its context; it does not at all prepare the reader to expect the axiom, that '*Virtue makes the* '*bliſs where'er we dwell.*' The laſt couplet of the quotation, '*Or taught the ſwains, &c.*' is little better than a ſuperfluous repetition of the ſame ſentiment. The Author beſides has not happily expreſſed his meaning; he undoubtedly deſigned to intimate, that a rural ſituation, however favourable to a virtuous life, would not neceſſarily produce it; but his language will eaſily admit of cavil; it may be ſaid, that ſurely it is needleſs to teach any man that '*groves and ſtreams cannot* '*beſtow virtue.*'

Theſe two paragraphs, '*Ye Perſian Maids, &c.*' '*Thus Selim ſung, &c.*' which now ſtand as a beginning, are ill-placed; the firſt forms a disjointed and anticipatory part of the Shepherd's ſong, and might

might have been eaſily interwoven with the reſt of it afterwards; the ſecond has been ſhewn ſo defective, that it had better have been omitted. The Eclogue ſhould have opened here.

V. 13. When *ſweet* and bluſhing, like a virgin bride,
The radiant morn reſum'd her orient pride,
When wanton gales along the valleys play,
Breathe on each flower, and bear their *ſweets* away;
By Tigris wandering waves he * ſat and ſung
This uſeful leſſon to the fair and young.

Selim's ſpeech or ſong, bears evident marks of puerility, or at leaſt of careleſsneſs; the couplets in which he compliments his Perſian Dames on their beauty, will not ſtand the teſt of a rigorous examination:

V. 19. Ye Perſian Dames, he ſaid, to you belong,
Well may they pleaſe, the morals of my ſong:

* A ſlight alteration would have been neceſſary here in order to introduce Selim the ſpeaker, either by name or character. This would have done,

By Tigris waves a Shepherd ſat and ſung.

No

No fairer maids, I truſt than you are found,
Grac'd with *ſoft arts*, the peopled world around!
The morn that lights you to your loves ſupplies,
Each gentle *ray* delicious to *your eyes*:
For you thoſe *flowers* her fragrant hands beſtow,
And yours the *love* that kings delight to know.
Yet think not theſe all *beauteous* as they are,
The beſt kind bleſſings heav'n can grant the fair!

This is ſpirited, but not claſſical. The objects here enumerated are too diſcordant to be ranked in one predicament. The '*radiance of eyes*' is very fitly introduced as a particular of perſonal beauty, but the '*flowers*' cannot poſſibly be introduced as ſuch, and conſequently, there ſeems no reaſon for introducing them at all. *Love* alſo conſidered as an abſtract idea, is not properly termed *beauteous*.

The ſucceeding lines are good; the ſimilies they contain are appropriate and elegant:

V. 29. Who truſt alone in beauty's feeble ray,
Boaſt but the worth Baſſora's pearls diſplay:
Drawn from the deep we own their ſurface bright,
But dark within, they drink no luſtrous light:
Such are the maids, and ſuch the charms they boaſt,
By ſenſe unaided, or to virtue loſt.
Self-flattering ſex! your hearts believe in vain,
That love ſhall blind when once he fires the ſwain;
Or hope a lover by your faults to win,
As ſpots on ermin beautify the ſkin.

Our Author's genealogy and deſcription of the Virtues, is conceived and expreſſed with no great propriety or preciſion. It is one of the many inſtances in which ſmooth verſe recommends very ſlovenly compoſition:

V. 43. Bleſt were the days when Wiſdom held her reign,
And ſhepherds ſought her on the ſilent plain;
With Truth ſhe wedded in the ſecret grove,
Immortal Truth, and daughters bleſt their love.

O haſte

O haſte fair maids! ye virtues come away,
Sweet peace and plenty lead you on your way!—

—Come thou whoſe thoughts, as limpid ſprings, are clear,
To lead the *train*, ſweet Modeſty appear:
Here make thy court amidſt our rural ſcene,
And ſhepherd girls ſhall own thee for their queen.
With thee be Chaſtity, of all afraid,
Diſtruſting all, a wiſe ſuſpicious maid;
But man the moſt—not more the mountain doe
Holds the ſwift falcon for her deadly foe.
Cold is her breaſt, like flowers that drink the dew,
A ſilken veil conceals her from the view.
No wild deſires amidſt thy *train* be known,
But Faith whoſe heart is fix'd on one alone:
Deſponding Meekneſs, with her downcaſt eyes,
And friendly Pity *full* of tender ſighs;
And *Love* the laſt: by theſe your hearts approve,
Theſe are the virtues that muſt *lead to love*.

The proſopopoiea '*Truth*' l. 45, &c. is an ambiguous character: truth as a ſimple ſubſtantive, has various ſenſes, ſuch as conſtancy, honeſty, contrariety to falſehood, &c. but in none of theſe ſenſes

can it be properly deemed the *father* of modeſty, chaſtity, faith, and meekneſs. '*Wiſdom*' may indeed, with better right be aſſigned as a *mother* to theſe, becauſe the perſon who is wiſe, will endeavour to be modeſt, chaſte, meek, and faithful. The perſonified virtues are here diſcriminated, ſome by internal quality, as *Modeſty* by her '*pure thoughts*,' and *Chaſtity* by her '*fear*;' and ſome by external appearance or action, as *Meekneſs* by her '*downcaſt eyes*,' and *Pity* by her '*ſighing*.' Dr. Langhorne has very juſtly obſerved, that the '*thoughts clear as* '*limpid ſprings*,' attributed to *Modeſty*, are equally attributable to *Chaſtity*; they are indeed not only equally, but more ſo. The '*ſilken veil*,' on the other hand, given to *Chaſtity*, *Modeſty* might have claimed with greater propriety. '*Deſponding*,' is not an appoſite epithet for *Meekneſs*; there can be no reaſon to characterize her by deſpair, but ſhe might have been not unjuſtly characterized

ized by diffidence. Among the above virtues, *Pity* a ſenſation, and *Love* a paſſion, are improperly claſſed, and *Love* is by that arrangement abſurdly made to lead to himſelf, '*And love the laſt*— '*Muſt lead to love, &c.*' The paſſage, notwithſtanding all theſe faults, is poetical, and ſome of the allegorical perſonages, ſeparately conſidered, are finely marked, *Chaſtity* in particular, by her *cautious ſuſpicions*, and *Faith* by her *attachment to one object*. The ſimile of the doe fearful of the falcon, is a juſt local peculiarity: in ſome parts of the eaſt, antelopes are taken by hawks, trained purpoſely to take them.*

The ſecond of theſe little Pieces, called Haſſan, or the Camel Driver, is of ſuperior character. This Poem contradicts hiſtory in one principal inſtance; the merchants of the eaſt travel in nume-

* This is a favourite diverſion at Aleppo. See Dr. Russel's History.

rous caravans, but Haſſan is introduced travelling alone in the deſart. But this circumſtance detracts little from our Author's merit; adherence to hiſtorical fact is ſeldom required in poetry, and there are few, even of the beſt compoſitions, in which it is not more or leſs violated. Haſſan, ſtruck with a ſudden and forcible impreſſion of the inconveniences he ſuffers, and the perils he expects, deſcribes them both, reproaches his own avarice which prompted him to riſque them for the ſake of gain; and reflecting on the ſuppoſed anxiety of a beloved fair-one, whom he had left, determines to return. The opening of the Eclogue paints ſolitary diſtreſs and danger in a manner that it were perhaps impoſſible to exceed:(l)

V. 1. In ſilent horror o'er the boundleſs waſte,
The driver Haſſan with his camels paſt:
One cruſe of water on his back he bore,
And his light ſcrip contain'd a ſcanty ſtore;

A fan

A fan of painted feathers in his hand,
To guard his ſhaded face from ſcorching ſand.
The ſultry ſun had gain'd the middle ſky,
And not a tree and not an herb was nigh;
The beaſts with pain their duſty way purſue,
Shrill roar'd the winds, and dreary was the view!
With deſperate ſorrow wild, the affrighted man
Thrice ſigh'd, thrice ſtruck his breaſt, and thus began:
'Sad was the hour, and luckleſs was the day,
'When firſt from Schiraz walls I bent my 'way!'

The thought in the following is proper, but not well expreſſed.

V. 15. Ah! little thought I of the blaſting wind,
The thirſt or pinching *hunger* that I find!
Bethink thee Haſſan, where ſhall thirſt aſſwage,
When fails this cruſe, his unrelenting rage?
Soon ſhall this ſcrip its precious load reſign;
Then what but *tears* and *hunger* ſhall be thine?

To a perſon in Haſſan's ſituation, the apprehenſion was natural, that his cruſe and ſcrip might be exhauſted before his journey was accompliſhed. This would induce him to ſpare his proviſion, even to

the indurance of a ſmall degree of hunger and thirſt, in order to avoid a greater. But the paſſage, from its commencement to its concluſion, has no climax or enhancement of idea: the ſpeaker begins and ends with '*hunger*;' he is *hungry* now, and he only expects to be *hungry* when his ſtore is expended. This miſtake might have been eaſily rectified; by omitting the firſt couplet, '*Ah little thought I, &c*' and conſequently ſuppreſſing the idea of preſent ſufferings; and then continuing the interrogations in the ſame mode, from the ſecond to the third; *When the contents of my cruſe and my ſcrip are exhauſted, how ſhall thirſt be relieved, and how ſhall hunger be ſatisfied?* Such ſeeming minutiæ as theſe, conſtitute the diſtinction between ſenſe and nonſenſe.

Haſſan's apoſtrophe to his camels is beautiful, but not correct:

V. 21. Ye mute companions of my toils, that bear
In all my *griefs*, a more than equal ſhare!
Here, where no *ſprings* in murmurs break away,
Or moſs-crown'd *fountains* mitigate the day,
In vain ye hope the *green* delights to know,
Which plains more bleſt, or *verdant* vales beſtow:
Here rocks alone, and taſteleſs ſands are found,
And faint and ſickly winds for ever howl around.

'*Griefs*,' in the ſecond line, ſhould have been changed for diſtreſs, or ſome other word of ſimilar import. *Springs* and *fountains*, are ſynonymous; the image of groves or ſhades might have been advantageouſly ſubſtituted for one of them. Dr. Langhorne has very juſtly objected to the '*green delights, of verdant vales*.' The phraſe, '*green delights*,' was firſt uſed by Thomſon.

And all the green delights Auſonia pours.
Summer, 945.

V. 31. Curſt be the gold and ſilver which perſuade
Weak men to follow *far-fatiguing* trade! *
The lilly peace outſhines the ſilver ſtore,
And life is dearer than the golden ore:
Yet money tempts us o'er the deſert brown,
To every diſtant mark and wealthy town.
Full oft we tempt the land, and oft the ſea:
And are we only yet repay'd by thee?
Ah! why was ruin ſo attractive made,
Or why fond man ſo eaſily betray'd?
Why heed we not, while mad we haſte along,
The gentle voice of peace, or pleaſure's ſong;
Or wherefore think the flow'ry mountain's ſide,
The fountain's murmurs, and the valley's pride,
Why think we theſe leſs pleaſing to behold,
Than dreary deſerts, if they lead to gold?

There are paſſages of which it is difficult to fix the merit. The above quotation is of that kind. To a man travelling in barren deſerts, it was natural to recall and inſiſt on the ideas of '*verdant vales*' and '*moſs-crown'd fountains*;' but when ſuch a man is repreſented as diſtreſſed

* *Far-fatiguing* is a bad compound.

and

and affrighted, '*wild with deſperate* '*ſorrow*, &c.' a repeated attention to thoſe comparatively unimportant objects, may be thought ill-timed, and too trifling to be probable. Whether the Poet was right or wrong in this reſpect, the paragraph is certainly languid from diffuſion; diminiſhing the number of lines would have greatly improved it. One of theſe couplets is of the ſort which (as Dr. Johnſon obſerves on another occaſion) if once read, will be read again, and frequently repeated:

The lilly peace, &c.

The thought of terming '*Peace a lilly*,' is conceived in the genuine oriental metaphorical manner; and it is pity that the effect of it was afterwards weakened by imperſonating the ſame ſubject, '*the* '*gentle voice of Peace*, &c.' To keep imagery and ſentiment conſiſtent, even through

through a ſhort poem, is no eaſy taſk; and he who accompliſhes it merits high approbation.

The idea of danger which the begining of the Eclogue impreſſed, is now reſumed and enforced with freſh vigour:

V. 49. O ceaſe my fears!—All frantic as I go,
When thought creates unnumber'd ſcenes of woe,
What if the lion in his rage I meet!
Oft in the duſt I view his printed feet:
And fearful! oft when days declining light
Yields her pale empire to the mourner night,
By hunger rous'd he ſcours the groaning plain,
Haunt wolves and ſullen tygers in his train:
Before them Death with ſhrieks directs their way,
Fills the wild yell and leads them to their prey.

Such is the power of poetry in the apprehenſive tremulous exclamation, '*What if* '*the lion, &c.*' that we ſeem to hear the voice of fear, and ſhudder as we hear it. The circumſtance of the '*printed foot-ſteps*' is minutely natural, and the proſopopoiea

ſopopoiea of *Death* is one of the fineſt inſtances of the horrid ſublime our language can boaſt of.

But Collins, in the deſcription of an Eaſtern deſert, could find additional terrors:

V. 61. At that dead hour the ſilent aſp ſhall creep,
If ought of reſt I find, upon my ſleep:
Or ſome ſwoln ſerpent twiſt his ſcales around,
And wake to anguiſh with a burning wound.

The picture would bear no further heightening; we are now relieved by a contraſted proſpect of content and ſecurity:

V. 65. Thrice happy they, the wiſe contented poor,
From luſt of wealth and *dread* of *death ſecure!*
They tempt no deſerts, and *no griefs they find*;*
Peace rules the day, where reaſon rules the mind.

* The idea of comparative happineſs is here too poſitively expreſſed. '*Secure from dread of death*, '*They* '*find no griefs*, &c.'

Whether

Whether this Eclogue might not have been more ſkilfully concluded, I am not diſpoſed to inquire; but ſomething may be ſaid in favour of the preſent concluſion. The man whom avarice had prompted to quit a beloved object, when diſappointed and diſtreſſed, might view his conduct in a culpable light, and be anxious to make reparation. Haſſan's recollection of his Zara, and his reflection on her ſorrows, ſeem therefore not unnaturally introduced, as an additional inducement to his return. The lines have their defects and their beauties. Dr. Langhorne thinks the fourth couplet, '*Yet as thou goeſt, &c.*' an artificial prettineſs: if it is faulty, the fault conſiſts in the remoteneſs of the compariſon, between the *ſighs* and the *blaſts of wind*. Zara's wiſhes for the ſafety of a lover, who, notwithſtanding her intreaties, perſiſted in leaving her, convey a pleaſing idea of her character;

V. 71.

V. 71. O hapleſs youth! for ſhe thy love hath won
The tender Zara will be moſt undone!
Big ſwell'd my heart, and own'd the powerful maid,
When faſt ſhe drop'd her tears, as thus ſhe ſaid:
" Farewell the youth, whom *ſighs* could not
" detain,
" Whom Zara's breaking *heart* implor'd in
" vain!
" Yet as thou goeſt, may every *blaſt* ariſe
" Weak and unfelt as theſe rejected *ſighs!*
" Safe o'er the wild, no perils mayſt thou ſee,
" No griefs endure, nor weep falſe youth like
" me."

O let me ſafely to the fair return,
Say with a kiſs, ſhe muſt not, ſhall not mourn;
O let me teach my heart to loſe its fears,
Recall'd by wiſdom's voice, and Zara's tears.

He ſaid, and call'd on heav'n to bleſs the day,
When back to Schiraz walls he bent his way.

The third Eclogue is called Abra, or the Georgian Sultana, and repreſents a Perſian monarch enamoured with a fair ſhepherdeſs, whom he raiſes to the Imperial

Imperial throne. The human mind always dwells with complacence on the ideas of rural ſolitude, and cottage innocence: we afford a ready indulgence to the deception which annexes to thoſe ideas, the idea of unmixed happineſs; though experience convinces us that no ſuch happineſs is really exiſtent. There is another favourite ſatisfaction which we derive from the contemplation of greatneſs elevating humble merit. A poem which deſcribes theſe ſubjects in the moſt agreeable colours, cannot fail to intereſt the reader.

The Piece opens with this beautiful picture of an evening proſpect:

V. 1. In Georgia's land where Tefflis tow'rs are ſeen,
In diſtant view along the level green,
While ev'ning dews inrich the glittering glade,
And the tall foreſts caſt a longer ſhade,
What time 'tis ſweet o'er fields of rice to ſtray,
Or ſcent the breathing maize at ſetting day;
Amid the maids of Zagen's peaceful grove,
Emyra ſung the pleaſing cares of love.

Of

Of Abra firſt began the tender ſtrain,
Who led her youth with flocks upon the plain:
At morn ſhe came thoſe willing flocks to lead,
Where lillies *rear them* in the wat'ry mead;
From early dawn the live-long hours ſhe told,
Till late at ſilent eve ſhe penn'd the fold.

Abra is introduced in a grove, wreathing a flowery chaplet for her hair. Shakeſpeare himſelf could not have deviſed a more natural and pleaſing incident than that of the monarch's attention, being attracted by her ſong:

V. 21. Great Abbas chanc'd that fated morn to ſtray,
By love conducted from the chace away;
Among the vocal vales he heard her ſong,
And ſought the vales and echoing groves among:
At length he found, and woo'd the rural maid,
She knew the monarch, and with fear obey'd.

Our great Epic Poet has well repreſented the general mother of mankind, as leaving with reluctance the flowers of paradiſe. Even when in purſuit of ſome ſuppoſed ſuperior good, we part with regret from trifles, to which we have been

been long accuſtomed. This natural ſentiment is here beautifully deſcribed:

V. 29. The royal lover bore her from the plain;
*Yet** ſtill her crook and bleating flock remain:
Oft as ſhe went, ſhe backward turn'd her view,
And bade that crook and bleating flock adieu.

Nor leſs characteriſtically does the Poet inſiſt on his ſhepherdeſs's attachment to her former reſidence and occupation:

V. 39. Yet midſt the blaze of courts ſhe fix'd her love,
On the cool fountain, or the ſhady grove;
Still with the ſhepherd's innocence her mind,
To the *ſweet vale*, and *flow'ry mead* inclin'd:
And oft as ſpring renew'd the plains with *flowers*,
Breath'd his ſoft gales, and led the fragrant hours,
With ſure return ſhe ſought the *ſylvan ſcene*,
The breezy mountain, and the *foreſt green*.
Her maids around her mov'd a duteous band!
Each bore a crook all rural in her hand:

* The uſe of the disjunctive *yet*, does not ſeem proper in this place, *where* would have been better.

Some

Some ſimple lay of herds and flocks they ſung;
With joy the mountain and the foreſt rung.

The critical reader will diſcern in this pleaſing paſſage, too great ſameneſs of imagery and expreſſion; too much of the 'ſweet *vale*,' the 'flowery *mead*,' and the 'plain renewed *with flowers*;' too much of the '*ſhady grove*,' the '*ſylvan ſcene*,' and the '*green foreſt*.' This is indeed a venial blemiſh, and might have been eaſily avoided.

The Royal Lover is then introduced attending his Abra in theſe her favourite excurſions, and the Piece concludes with reflections on his happineſs, and a wiſh that others may imitate his example:

V. 65. Let thoſe who rule on Perſia's jewell'd throne,
Be fam'd for love, and gentleſt love alone;
Or wreathe like Abbas, full of fair renown,
The lover's myrtle, with the warrior's crown.
O happy days! the maids around her ſay;
O haſte profuſe of bleſſings, haſte away!
"Be every youth like royal Abbas mov'd;
"And every Georgian maid like Abra lov'd."

The fourth Eclogue, intitled Agib and Secander, or the Fugitives, has great merit. War, that diſgrace of human nature, and ſource of human miſery, is here painted in its proper colours; intruding on the habitations of innocence, exchanging ſecurity for terror, ſafety for danger, and domeſtick comfort for unmerited diſtreſs. Two Circaſſian ſhepherds are deſcribed flying by night from the progreſſive devaſtations of a relentleſs enemy.

The couplet with which it opens, has ſomething ſeemingly incongruous with the reſt of the beginning: it conveys too pleaſurable, perhaps too trifling an idea to connect eaſily with the grandeur and ſolemnity of the context:

V. 1. *In fair Circaſſia, where to love inclin'd,*
Each ſwain was bleſt, for every maid was kind;
At that ſtill hour, when awful midnight reigns,
And none but wretches haunt the twilight plains;
What time the moon had hung her lamp on high,
And paſt in radiance through the cloudleſs ſky;

Sad

Sad o'er the dews two brother ſhepherds fled,
Where wild'ring fear and deſp'rate ſorrow led:
Faſt as they preſt their flight, behind them lay
Wide ravag'd plains, and vallies *ſtole away*.
Along the mountain's bending ſides they ran,
'Till faint and weak, Secander thus began.

Part of Secander's ſpeech, and Agib's reply, deſcribe local progreſſion, by ſeveral pictureſque circumſtances:

SECANDER.

V. 13. O ſtay thee Agib, for my feet deny,
No longer friendly to my life, to fly.
Friend of my heart, O turn thee and *ſurvey*,
Trace our ſad flight thro' all its length of *way!*
And firſt review that long extended plain,
And yon wide groves already paſt with pain!
Yon ragged cliff, whoſe dangerous path we tried,
And laſt this lofty mountain's weary ſide!

AGIB.

Weak as thou art, yet hapleſs muſt thou know,
The toils of flight, or ſome ſeverer woe!
Still as I haſte, the Tartar ſhouts behind,
And ſhrieks and ſorrows load the ſaddening wind:

In rage of heart, with ruin in his hand,
He blaſts our harveſts, and deforms our land.
Yon citron grove, whence firſt in fear we came,
Droops its *fair honours* to the conquering flame:
Far fly the ſwains, like us, in deep deſpair,
And leave to ruffian bands their fleecy care.

From the pen of Cowley, ſuch an obſervation as Secander's, 'that his *feet* 'were no longer *friendly* to his *life*,' might have been expected, but Collins rarely committed ſuch violations of ſimplicity. The citron grove *drooping its fair honours*, is the language of a juvenile writer.

During the time the ſhepherds are ſuppoſed to reſt, Secander upbraids the indolence of the Perſian monarch, by which the incurſions of the Tartars were encouraged; and Agib enumerating ſome of the beautiful ſcenes of his country, regrets the viciſſitude they had ſuffered from the ravage of war. Whether ſuch an enumeration can be thought compatible

tible with the diſturbed ſtate of mind, neceſſarily attendant on a painful and perilous ſituation, is doubtful; but Dr. Langhorne has juſtly obſerved, that the expreſſion in this part of the poem, is almoſt inimitably ſweet and beautiful:

V. 37. Yet theſe green hills, in ſummer's ſultry heat,
Have lent the monarch oft a cool retreat.
Sweet to the ſight is Zabran's *flowery* plain,
And *once* by maids and ſhepherds lov'd in vain!
No more the virgins ſhall delight to rove
By Sargis banks or Irwan's ſhady grove;
On Tarkie's mountain catch the cooling gale,
Or breathe the ſweets of Aly's *flowery* vale:
Fair ſcenes! but ah! no more with peace poſſeſt,
With eaſe alluring, and with plenty bleſt.
No more the ſhepherd's whitening tents appear,
Nor the kind products of a bounteous year;
No more the date with ſnowy bloſſoms crown'd,
But ruin ſpreads her baleful fires around.

This paſſage however, with all its excellencies, is not correct. The above-mentioned critick remarks a want of va-

riety in the epithets; the '*plain of Zabran*,' and the '*vale of Aly*,' are both *flowery*. But this is not its ſole fault. In the fourth line, the word *once* ſeems to refer to ſome other time and circumſtance than the preſent; '*By nymphs* '*and ſhepherds lov'd alas! in vain*,' would have been better. After mentioning in general terms the '*products of a bounteous year*;' the mention of one particular only, '*the date with ſnowy bloſſoms crown'd*,' (though the image in itſelf is fine) has a bad effect.* Grammatical concord is alſo violated; of the three ſubſtantives, the '*tents*,' the '*products*,' and the '*date*,' two are plural and one ſingular, and *appear*, the verb of action common to all, being plural, cannot agree with the laſt.

The fate of beauty ſuffering in the hands of ſavage ferocity, is ſtrikingly repreſented in the following:

* In a ſpeaker's ſituation, to have introduced a number of different flowers or fruits would have been improper; the introducing a ſingle inſtance is aukward.

V. 51,

V. 51. In vain Circaſſia boaſts her ſpicy groves,
For ever fam'd for pure and happy loves:
In vain ſhe boaſts her faireſt of the fair,
Their eyes, blue languiſh, and their golden hair!
Thoſe eyes in tears their fruitleſs griefs muſt ſend;
Thoſe hairs the Tartar's cruel hand ſhall rend.

The concluſion ſets the principal ſubject in full view; we hear the ſhrieks of the diſtreſſed villagers, and ſee the approach of the fires, with the two ſhepherds flying before them by moon-light, over a vaſt and ſolitary region. The paſſage is an inſtance of the true ſublime:

V. 67. He ſaid; when loud along the vale was heard,
A ſhriller ſhriek, and nearer fires appear'd:
The affrighted ſhepherds through the dews of night,
Wide o'er the moon-light hills renew'd their flight.

Collins's diſapprobation of his own Eclogues, has been imputed to his think-

ing them not ſufficiently expreſſive of Aſiatick manners. But the idea of manners ſeems miſtakenly ſubſtituted for the idea of language. The author has ſeldom violated the great outline of eaſtern cuſtoms, and his ſubjects did not often lead him to a deſcription of minute particulars. His diction, as Dr. Langhorne has remarked, is not the diction of the eaſt; it is moſtly ſimple, and often elegant, but not flowery or metaphorical. The Eclogues, with all the faults that have been pointed out, have ſuch poetical merit, that the above-mentioned writer's deciſion may be ſafely adopted, when he intimates that they have nothing to fear from a compariſon with any of their predeceſſors.

ESSAY

ESSAY VII.

On GRAY'S CHURCH-YARD ELEGY.

THE Elegy written in a Country Church-Yard, from the nature of its ſubject, and the merit of its executions, has obtained an uncommon ſhare of popularity. The principal reſpect in which it has been ſuppoſed defective, is a want of plan; an ingenious Writer has obſerved, 'that it is thought by ſome to 'be no more than a confuſed heap of 'ſplendid ideas, thrown together with-'out order, and without proportion.'* That it is, however, not deſtitute of

* Mr. KNOX's Eſſays, Moral and Literary, Vol. 1, p. 92, 1ſt. Edit.

plan,

plan, the following analyſis will ſufficiently demonſtrate: whether the arrangement might not have been in ſome parts improved, is another queſtion. The Poet very graphically deſcribes the proceſs of a calm evening, in which he introduces himſelf wandering near a Country Church-Yard. From the ſight of the place, he takes occaſion, by a few natural and ſimple, but important circumſtances, to characterize the life of a peaſant; and obſerves, that it need not be diſdained by ambition or grandeur, whoſe moſt diſtinguiſhed ſuperiorities muſt all terminate in the grave. He then proceeds to intimate, that it was not from any natural inequality of abilities, but from want of acquired advantages, as riches, knowledge, &c. that the humble race, whoſe place of interment he was ſurveying, did not rank with the moſt celebrated of their cotemporaries. The ſame impediments, however, which obſtructed their courſe to greatneſs, he thinks

thinks alſo precluded their progreſs in vice, and, conſequently, that what was loſt in one reſpect, was gained in the other. From this reflection he not unnaturally proceeds to remark, on that univerſality of regard to the deceaſed, which produces, even for theſe humble villagers, a commemoration of their paſt exiſtence. Then turning his attention on himſelf, he indulges the idea of his being commemorated in the ſame manner, and introduces an epitaph which he ſuppoſes to be employed on the occaſion. The matter here, it muſt be allowed, is not extenſive nor uncommon; the poem muſt, therefore, depend much on the manner for its importance:

V. 1. The curfew tolls the knell of parting day;
The lowing herd wind ſlowly o'er the lea;
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkneſs and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landſcape on the ſight,
And all the air a ſolemn ſtillneſs holds,

Save

Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight
And drowſy tinklings lull the diſtant folds;

Save that, from yonder ivy-mantled tower,
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of ſuch, as wand'ring near her ſecret bow'r,
Moleſt her ancient ſolitary reign.

Poetry can alone univerſally intereſt, when it "brings back the memory of the paſt," when it recalls the objects we have ſeen, and the emotions we have felt. Every man of obſervation, who has wandered in the fields in an autumnal evening, will acknowledge Gray's picture to be drawn from nature. The circumſtances which denote the progreſſion of time, are regularly introduced, and finely marked; as the departure of day;* the homeward return of the herd, and of the plowman; the gradua fading of the landſcape; the ſubſequen ſilence, broken only by the hum of th beetle; the diſtant tinkling of the we ther bell, and hooting of the ow

* *Parting day* was undoubtedly intended for *ſetting*

and laſtly, the riſing of the moon, by which the Church-Yard, the object of contemplation, becomes viſible.

Parallels between different ſubjects are ſeldom natural or juſt enough to be pleaſing; they exiſt oftener in the fancy of the perſon comparing, than in any actual reſemblance of the things compared. There are inſtances however, in which they have their advantages: the ſuppoſed tolling of the curfew, juſt as the ſun was leaving the horizon, is not wholly deſtitute of analogy to the tolling of what is called the paſſing bell for the deceaſed. The mention of a knell, naturally recalls this idea, and ſpreads a ſolemnity over the mind, which prepares it for the ſentiments that follow.

A Periodical Writer * has objected to this line.

'The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.'

* The Babler, Vol. 1. No. 55.

The

The verb being uſed in the preſent, inſtead of the preterite, *parting* inſtead of *parted*, produces (he thinks) a falſe metaphor, as the bell is never rung till the perſon is dead. Among our anceſtors, however, the bell was rung while the party was expiring, in order to obtain the prayers of the neighbourhood on his behalf.*

There is an anachroniſm, in introducing the curfew, a cuſtom of a remote period, in a modern poem, in which the poet alſo introduces himſelf; but this is a venial tranſgreſſion of propriety, for which the goodneſs of the poetry amply compenſates. This ſtanza has, indeed, many beauties: there are, perhaps, few inſtances, wherein the ſenſe is more enforced by correſpondent ſound, than

* The very expreſſion of *paſſing* bell accords with this idea. See BRAND's edition of BOURNE's Antiquitates Vulgares, page 12.

in that of the '*herd winding ſlowly o'er* '*the lea,*' and that of the verb '*plod,*' applied to the movement of the plowman. The idea of ſolitude, always grand, and often pleaſing, is ſtrongly impreſſed by the circumſtance of the cattle, and the peaſant relinquiſhing the fields to the wandering poet.

The Beetle* was introduced in poetry by Shakeſpeare, but that circumſtance is no proof of imitation in Gray; both poets undoubtedly transferred immediately from nature, an image ſo very common. Shakeſpeare has made the moſt of his deſcription; indeed, far too much, conſidering the occaſion:

* The name of beetle points out the *genus*, not the *ſpecies* of inſect. That here intended is the large black one, ſo common in autumnal and mild wintry evenings, as often to fly with conſiderable force againſt the faces of perſons walking abroad. This has been confounded with a ſummer beetle, viz. the common tree cockchafer.

——To black Hecate's ſummons
The ſhard-born beetle with his drowſey hum,
Hath rung night's yawning peal.——

Macbeth, who had committed one murder in perſon, who intended to commit another by proxy, and was about to acquaint his wife with his intention, could not be very likely to talk of Hecate ſummoning the beetle '*With his drowſy* '*hum to ring night's yawning peal*;' nor to recollect that ſuch beetle had its place of nativity under a tile ſhard.* The imagination muſt be indeed fertile, which could produce this ill placed exuberance of imagery. The Poet, when compoſing this paſſage, muſt have had in his mind all the remote ideas of Hecate, a heathen goddeſs, of a beetle, of night, of a peal of bells, and of that action of the muſcles, commonly called a gape or yawn.

* Shakeſpeare was remarkably fond of deſcriptive minuteneſs; his beetle is *ſhard-born*, his bat is *cloyſter'd*, with many other inſtances of the ſame kind, introduced with more or leſs propriety.

Dr.

Dr. Hill, in his Natural Hiſtory of Animals, has objected to the cauſe aſſigned by Gray, for the hollowing of the owl: the voice of that bird, he thinks, is not the voice of complaint, but rather of joy or exultation. Perhaps we are not ſufficiently acquainted with the œconomy of nocturnal fowls, to decide poſitively what is the real occaſion of their clamour. That it is produced by moleſtation, we have no reaſon to believe, becauſe they are ſeldom moleſted, and often clamorous; that it is produced by pleaſure, we have no certainty, nor are we more certain that it proceeds from hunger. Owls have been noticed to be more vociferous in the ſame places, in ſome years, and in ſome ſeaſons of the year, than in others. During the breeding time, when the feathered race in general are moſt noiſy, it is remarkable that this genus is uncommonly ſilent: two of theſe animals often ſeem to anſwer each other's voices; and a ſin-

gle one has ſometimes ſeemed to chuſe a ſituation, wherein its own voice might be returned by an echo. The paſſage in queſtion, however, is truly poetical; and though it may aſſign a wrong cauſe, in a matter where we cannot aſſign a right one, few perſons perhaps will wiſh it had been omitted.

V. 13. Beneath thoſe rugged elms, that yew trees ſhade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet ſleep.

The breezy call of incenſe-breathing morn,
The ſwallow twittering from the ſtraw-built ſhed,
The cock's ſhrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more ſhall rouſe them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth ſhall burn,
Or buſy houſewife ply her evening care;
No children run to liſp their ſire's return,
Or climb his knees the envy'd kiſs to ſhare.

Oft

Oft did the harveſt to their ſickle yield,
Their furrow oft the ſtubborn glebe has* broke:
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their ſturdy ſtroke!

The rural day is here moſt beautifully depicted: the images are ſo obvious, ſo natural in themſelves, and ſo naturally connected, that one is ſurprized to find them now firſt placed in this pleaſing point of combination. All the circumſtances, except the morning breeze, which is perhaps too poetically made the voice of a proſopopoiea, '*The breezy call, &c.*' are expreſſed without diminution of dignity, in the ſimpleſt

* The other members of this ſtanza are ſimilar, with regard to the notation of time; the verbs are all in the ſimple preterite; and if the meaſure of the verſe would have allowed the omiſſion of the auxiliar *has*, this line would have been of the ſame ſtructure, and been better. If any auxiliar were admitted, I think it ſhould be the preterpluperfect *had*, as ſpeaking of acts performed previous to a certain point of paſt time, viz. that of the peaſant's deceaſe.

manner imaginable; cottage life is delineated in the moſt pleaſing colours, every thing amiable is introduced, every thing diſguſting or ridiculous is ſuppreſſed. There is, however, a love of order in ſome minds, which would have been better ſatisfied with a different arrangement of theſe ſtanzas: the rural morning, as in nature, might have been immediately ſucceeded by the rural mid-day, and the rural mid-day by the rural evening. By this means alſo, the mind would have repoſed on the pleaſing and intereſting idea of the peaſant ſurrounded by his children.

The breezy call of incenſe-breathing morn,
The ſwallow twittering from the ſtraw-built ſhed,
The cock's ſhrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more ſhall rouſe them from their lowly bed.

Oft did the harveſt to their ſickle yield,
Their furrow oft the ſtubborn glebe has broke:

How

How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their ſturdy ſtroke!

For them no more the blazing hearth ſhall burn,
Or buſy houſewife ply her evening care;
No children run to liſp their ſire's return,
Or climb his knees the envy'd kiſs to ſhare.

The matter of tranſpoſition might, indeed, have been carried ſtill farther; the buſineſs of the reſpective ſeaſons might have been mentioned in regular progreſſion:

Oft jocund did they drive their team afield,
Their furrow oft the ſtubborn glebe had broke:
How did the harveſt to their ſickle yield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their ſturdy ſtroke!

The poetry ſeems to ſuffer little or nothing from this alteration. One objection may perhaps ariſe, that by inſiſting on a multiplicity of diurnal acts, in driving the team afield, '*Oft jocund*, '*&c.*' inſtead of a multiplicity of annual

operations, in gathering the harveſt, '*Oft 'did, &c.*' we looſe the pleaſing idea of the ſuppoſed longævity of a ruſtick. It may alſo be queſtioned, whether the exclamatory '*How,*' has not more pathos, when applied to the mental hilarity of the carter, than when applied to the corporeal energy or agility of the reaper.

V. 29. Let not ambition mock their uſeful toil,
Their homely joys, and deſtiny obſcure;
Nor grandeur hear, with a diſdainful ſmile,
The ſhort and ſimple annals of the poor:

The pleonaſm and periſſology, have been already diſcriminated as bearing, one a good ſenſe, the other a bad one; as modes of ſpeech, in both of which more words are uſed than are abſolutely neceſſary, but as modes of ſpeech, eſſentially different in their intention and effect.* The pleonaſm is here beautifully exemplified; all, in fact, is ſaid in the firſt two lines of the ſtanza, '*Let not, &c.*' that is ſaid in the third and fourth; but the ite-

* See page 43.

ration

ration is a climax that impreſſes the idea with additional vigour. Few poetical images have been more ſtrongly drawn, than this of '*Grandeur ſmiling diſdain-fully at the annals of the poor.*'

V. 33. The boaſt of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that Beauty, all that Wealth e'er gave,
Awaits * alike the inevitable hour;
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

This ſtanza is characterized by energy, and melody, in the higheſt degree. Poetry attains her purpoſe by various ways; ſometimes by ſingle, and ſometimes by combined efforts; and where variety does not produce confuſion, it often adds force. In a hiſtory piece well executed, a number of perſons, all of diſtinct character, but co-operating to one general end, will moſtly enhance its

* It ſhould have been *await*, the plural, for it includes a number of circumſtances.

value. We have here, firſt, a group of abſtract ideas, '*The boaſt of heraldry*, '&c.' ſo forcibly convey'd, that we almoſt imperſonate them in our own mind, as '*awaiting the approach of the* '*inevitable hour:*' the ſcene is then changed, and the ſame circumſtance repreſented in another manner; we ſee the '*paths of glory*,' however different or diſtant, all converging to, and concluding in, one central point, they '*lead but to* '*the Grave.*' It is obſervable, that the poet here properly confines himſelf to the gifts of fortune, '*The boaſt of heral-*'*dry, &c.*' one inſtance only, that of beauty, excepted; thus artfully preparing us for his ſubſequent ſtanzas, '*Per-*'*haps in this neglected ſpot, &c.*' where he introduces the gifts of nature as equally common to the rich and the poor. If beauty, which, as a gift of nature, is at leaſt as frequent among the latter as among the former, had been totally omitted, the paſſage might have gained in point of regularity, though it would have

loſt

loſt in point of pathos. That even Gray could not unite all advantages, only proves, that, in all human compoſitions, there muſt be imperfection.

V. 37. Nor you, ye proud, *impute to theſe the fault*;
If memory o'er their tomb no trophies raiſe,
Where thro' the long-drawn iſle and fretted vault,
The pealing anthem ſwells the note of praiſe.

Can ſtoried urn, or animated buſt,
Back to its manſion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour's voice provoke the ſilent duſt,
Or Flattery ſooth the dull cold ear of death?

The phraſe, '*impute to theſe the fault*,' does not ſeem very happily to expreſs the poet's idea; which was obviouſly this, that the great have no pretence to deſpiſe the mean for the privation of thoſe funeral honours, which can avail nothing to the dead, of any rank whatever. The ſecond ſtanza, '*Can ſtoried urn, &c.*' aſks queſtions, which ſurely need not have been aſked, becauſe they can be anſwered only in

in the negative; they are, however, aſked, with ſuch dignity and grace, that we muſt not only pardon, but admire them.

The Author of theſe Eſſays has known ſo many inſtances of a coincidence totally caſual, a reſemblance of ſentiment or expreſſion, where there could be no poſſibility of communication, that he ſcarcely dares to ſay what he thinks is, or is not, really a deſigned or accidental imitation; or in other words, where memory has, or has not, been either conſciouſly, or unconſciouſly concerned. When Gray wrote theſe ſtanzas, he poſſibly might have been reading Tickell's beautiful Poem on the Death of Addiſon; and the Weſtminſter-Abbey ſcene might conſequently furniſh ſome of his *Diſjecti Membra Poetæ*. This however is by no means certain; a man of Gray's diſpoſition would undoubtedly ſometimes frequent our venerable Gothick Cathedrals,

Cathedrals,* and might copy immediately from the originals, his '*long drawn* '*iſle*,' '*fretted vault*,' '*pealing anthem*,' and '*animated ſtatue*.' Be this as it may, it is at leaſt worth obſerving, how nobly, yet, how variouſly, two great maſters || have touched the ſame ſubject:

> How ſilent did his old companions tread,
> By midnight lamps, the manſions of the dead;
> Thro' breathing ſtatues, then unheeded things,
> Thro' rows of warriors, and thro' walks of kings!
> What awe did the ſlow ſolemn knell inſpire,
> The pealing organ, and the pauſing choir.—
>
> TICKELL.

V. 45. Perhaps in this neglected ſpot is laid
Some heart, once pregnant with celeſtial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have ſway'd,
Or wak'd to extaſy the living lyre.

* We have GRAY's own authority for this. See MASON's edition of his Poems, &c. quarto, p. 260.

|| TICKELL, however neglected his works may be, was really a genuine poet.

But

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the ſpoils of Time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repreſs'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the ſoul.

Full many a gem of pureſt ray ſerene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to bluſh unſeen,
And waſte its ſweetneſs on the deſart air.

The Engliſh language probably cannot boaſt a finer ſpecimen of poetry than theſe ſtanzas. The ſuppoſition of the powers poſſeſſed, of the circumſtances which prevented their exertion, and the illuſtrative compariſons, are all communicated with a grandeur and energy that have ſeldom been equalled. The Poet calls from the graves before him, the hands that might have wielded the ſceptre, or ſtruck the lyre, and creates in our imaginations the allegorical beings, who repreſſed their progreſs to greatneſs; Knowledge with-holding the ſight of her roll, and Penury caſting on them a look, which

which might be metaphorically ſaid to freeze or congeal their faculties.*

There is in Young's Night Thoughts, a proſopopoiea of Midnight, waving a liſt of mortality in the ſtartled eye, or ſight of Fancy:

> By the long liſt of ſwift mortality,
> From Adam downwards to this ev'ning's knell,
> Which Midnight waves in Fancy's ſtartled eye.

Gray undoubtedly had read the lines, yet it is queſtionable whether he thought of

* The deſigner, and engraver, have more than once employed their reſpective arts, in producing an embelliſhment to this noble poem. The poet leaning over a tomb-ſtone, given us by one, and the funeral poſſeſſion by another, are trite and obvious ideas. The ſtanza in queſtion would afford a fine picture: two of Gray's Fore-fathers of the hamlet, might be introduced repoſing from their labour; dignity and grace might be given to their forms; the eye of one beaming celeſtial fire, might caſt a regretful look at Knowledge turning from him with her folded roll; the other might indignantly regard Penury, who at a diſtance ſhould, with a calm ſeverity of countenance, point out to him a plough, or ſome other inſtrument of that cultivation, which it was his lot to attend to.

them

them when he produced this not very diſſimilar image of Knowledge with her ample page. The action of the perſon is however properly varied, as the general ſubject required; Midnight is expoſing the contents of the roll, knowledge is concealing them. There is in Pope's Rape of the Lock, a paſſage which poſſibly ſupplied our author with his ſentiment; and there is in Young's Satires, another to which he might be indebted for his turn of expreſſion:

Like roſes that in deſerts bloom and die.
POPE.
Full many a flower is born to bluſh unſeen.
GRAY.
And waſte their muſic on the ſavage race.
YOUNG.
And waſte their ſweetneſs on the deſert air.
GRAY.

V. 57. Some village Hampden, that, with dauntleſs breaſt,
The little tyrant of his fields withſtood;

Some

Some mute inglorious Milton here may reſt;
Some Cromwell guiltleſs of his country's blood.

The applauſe of liſtening ſenates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to deſpiſe,
To ſcatter plenty o'er a ſmiling land,
And read their hiſtory in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumſcrib'd alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
Forbade to wade through ſlaughter to a throne,
And ſhut the gates of mercy on mankind;

The ſtruggling pangs of conſcious truth to hide,
To quench the bluſhes of ingenuous ſhame,
Or heap the ſhrines of luxury and pride,
With incenſe kindled at the Muſe's flame.

The doctrine which our poet had been inculcating in general terms, and illuſtrating by remote ſimile, by the gem and the flower, he here proceeds to illuſtrate, by ſuppoſed particular example; but ſome of the inſtances adduced in exemplification, do not ſeem happily diſpoſed. The mind is always beſt ſatisfied,

tisfied, when its finds the different parts of a paragraph, bearing either a cloſe analogy, or regular contraſt, of thought and expreſſion. The '*Hands that might* '*have borne the rod of empire,*' ſhould have been, as it were, realized in the mention of ſome monarch of ſuperior celebrity; as the '*Hands that might have waked* '*the living lyre,*' have their realization in the mention of Milton. Inſtead of this, we now meet with images of another character; Hampden a *patriot*, and Cromwell a *warrior*. The deſign, however, which is thus complex and confuſed, might have been rendered ſimple, if the radical ſtanza, '*Perhaps in this* '*neglected ſpot, &c.*' had ſtood totally unconnected with its ſucceſſors, which would have been the caſe, if the inſtance of Milton had been omitted. The *King* and the *Poet*, would then have been equally diſmiſſed, without perſonal repreſentation; and Hampden and Cromwell, the *Senator* and the *General*, would have

have become principals, to whom the two ſucceeding ſtanzas, '*The applauſe* '*of liſtening ſenates, &c,*' would have borne a proper relation; the ſenatorial attributes being naturally appended to the one, and the military criminalities to the other. Had this plan been purſued, the laſt ſtanza of the above quotation, '*The ſtruggling pangs, &c,*' muſt have been ſuppreſſed; and indeed it may be doubted, whether much loſs would have been ſuſtained by its ſuppreſſion. Beſides its too long ſuſpending the cloſe of the period, it contains ſentiments perhaps not ſtrictly juſt: it ſuppoſes an uniform innocence in humble life, which aſſuredly cannot be found there; the villager will learn '*to hide* '*the pangs of ſtruggling truth,*' or in other words, to tell a lye with a good grace, as well as the politician or the trader; nor will he often be behind hand with his ſuperiors, in '*quenching* '*the bluſhes of ſhame,*' or acquiring what

is commonly called a conſummate ſtock of impudence.

That which Gray has left imperfect, it may be thought (and perhaps juſtly) preſumption to attempt to amend; to render the preceding obſervations more intelligible, is therefore all that is meant by the following alterations:

Perhaps in this neglected ſpot is laid
  Some heart once pregnant with celeſtial fire;
Hands that the rod of empire might have ſway'd,
  Or wak'd to extaſy the living lyre:

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
  Rich with the ſpoils of Time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repreſs'd their daring rage,
  And froze the vigorous current of the ſoul:

Full many a gem of pureſt ray ſerene,
  The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to bluſh unſeen,
  And waſte its ſweetneſs on the deſart air.

Some village Hampden who with dauntleſs breaſt,
  The little tyrant of his fields withſtood;

Some

Some bold aſpiring Cromwell here may reſt,
Obſcure, and guiltleſs of his country's blood:

The applauſe of liſtening ſenates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to deſpiſe,
To ſcatter plenty o'er a ſmiling land,
And read their hiſtory in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbad; nor circumſcrib'd alone,
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
Forbad to wade through ſlaughter to a throne,
And ſhut the gates of mercy on mankind.

There is another method by which this paſſage might be rendered more regular. The radical ſtanza, '*Perhaps in this neg-* '*lected ſpot, &c.*' ſpecifies only ſimple eminence, without adjunct of either good or evil: the fourth ſtanza, '*Some village* '*Hampden,*' by its perſonal illuſtration, rather prematurely introduces both, and might therefore be expunged; the reſt would then conſiſtently expatiate on thoſe qualities in a variety of their operations:

Perhaps in this neglected ſpot is laid
Some heart, once pregnant with celeſtial fire;

Hands that the rod of empire might have ſway'd,
Or wak'd to extaſy the living lyre:

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the ſpoils of time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill penury repreſs'd their daring rage,
And froze the vigorous current of the ſoul:

Full many a gem of pureſt ray ſerene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to bluſh unſeen,
And waſte its ſweetneſs on the deſert air.

The applauſe of liſtening ſenates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to deſpiſe,
To ſcatter plenty o'er a ſmiling land,
And read their hiſtory in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbad; nor circumſcrib'd alone,
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
Forbad to wade through ſlaughter to a throne,
And ſhut the gates of mercy on mankind.

But who, even for the ſake of regularity, could admit ſuch an alteration? who could bear to loſe the recollection of ſuch national and intereſting examples, the recollection of a Hampden, a Milton, and a Cromwell?

The

The Periodical Writer before-mentioned, ſeems to have perceived that this part of the Elegy was in ſome manner defective; but not underſtanding it fully, he has accuſed it of faults with which it is not chargeable: 'The author,' ſays he, 'in the very moment that he intended to laſh Cromwell with the greateſt ſeverity, introduces him in the ſame company with Hampden and Milton, the objects of his higheſt admiration; and laments, in the ſame introductory paſſage, that

> Chill penury repreſs'd his noble rage,
> And froze the genial current of his ſoul.

'It is odd,' continues he, 'that a *noble* rage ſhould ever be a *guilty* one.'

This is miſrepreſentation; the Critic has made the nonſenſe which he cenſures. The paſſage, which he juſtly terms *introductory*, occurs before any mention is

made of Hampden, Milton, or Cromwell: it refers only to the Peaſants, who are ſuppoſed to have poſſeſſed powers equal to the powers of thoſe celebrated characters, but without opportunity of expanding them into action. Hampden, Milton, and Cromwell are, it is true, introduced in company, not as common objects of praiſe, but as common poſſeſſors of the *noble rage* which had been mentioned, a neutral expreſſion, by which I underſtand no moral quality, either good or evil, but merely that *vivida vis animi*, which capacitates for great actions, whether virtuous or vicious in their own nature. With the ſame erroneous idea, he proceeds to the context, '*The applauſe of* '*liſtening ſenates, &c.*' 'Here,' ſays he, 'Cromwell is allowed his ſhare of vir-'tue, as well as Hampden and Milton; 'and they, in the pronoun plural *their*, 'are dragged in for their ſhare of vices, 'as well as the celebrated uſurper.'

But

But the pronoun plural *their* relates neither to Hampden, nor Milton, nor Cromwell, but to two claſſes of ruſticks, who, if circumſtances had favoured the exertion of their abilities when living, might either have benefited or injured their fellow creatures: ſuch of them as had virtue in their reſtricted ſphere, would only have been more conſpicuouſly good; ſuch of them as had vice, would only have been preeminently wicked.*

This paſſage has been ſufficiently conſidered, with regard to its ſenſe; ſome attention ſeems now due to its expreſſion:

> To ſcatter plenty o'er a ſmiling land,
> And read their hiſtory in a nation's eyes.

* This Writer's objections may ſeem unneceſſarily attended to; but as his Eſſay is the only profeſſed Criticiſm on GRAY's Elegy, it ſeemed to require ſome notice.

Poetical boldneſs, carried to its utmoſt claſſical limit, is inſtanced in theſe lines. Some of the images are ſo uncertainly marked, that we ſcarcely know whether they were intended for natural objects or allegorical perſonages. '*Plenty*,' indeed, which is very often perſonified, cannot poſſibly be ſo here; for the circumſtance of being '*ſcattered*,' precludes the idea of a perſon, and fixes the meaning to the actual produce of cultivation. The '*land*,' from the application of the epithet '*ſmiling*,' may be regarded as a perſonification, but perhaps nothing more was really deſigned, than the mere extent of the country; which when repleniſhed with flowers, fruits, and corn, is frequently ſaid to *ſmile*. The next line, '*And read their hiſtory, &c.*' ranks in a ſtill more doubtful predicament. We are at a loſs to determine, whether we are to underſtand by the word '*nation*,' the croud of individuals, the real people at large, in *propria perſona*, or the ſame ſubject conſidered in the aggregate,

as

as comprehended in one ſublime imaginary exiſtence. The firſt idea undoubtedly occurred firſt to the poet, and might produce the ſecond, which was probably what he meant to convey to the reader. The metaphor in this line, '*And read their hiſtory, &c.*' though conſiderably removed from ſimplicity, does not ſeem to violate propriety: the emotions of the mind are, it is well known, viſible to a certain degree in the countenance; and by a long eſtabliſhed mode of ſpeech, which exchanges a general for a ſpecifick term, inſtead of ſaying we *perceive*, we ſay we *read* them. The Author then had not paſſed the bounds of cuſtom, in ſuppoſing of patriots or heroes, that they read admiration or reverence in the eyes of a nation; but he goes further, and, by a metonymy of effect for cauſe, ſuppoſes that they read there, the hiſtory of thoſe actions, for which they are admired or revered. To illuſtrate his ſentiment by example, were eaſy; the late

Duke

Duke of Cumberland, after the battle of Culloden, and the late Earl of Chatham at the cloſe of the war, 1763, muſt have been beheld with ſuch obvious gratitude, that they might be ſaid to '*read* '*their hiſtory in a nation's eyes.*'

It is worthy obſervation, that the circumſtance which Gray has thus dignified, and repreſented as glorious and enviable, Pope has degraded, and endeavoured to render an object of contempt:

> One ſelf-approving hour whole years outweighs,
> Of ſtudied ſtarers, and of loud huzzas.

Gray's expreſſion, it may be ſaid, involves the whole publick; the moſt reſpectable part of it the opulent and intelligent, as well as the vulgar; Pope alludes only to the latter. But that Pope's ſentiments of popularity, even with the higher ranks of mankind, were not

not very favourable, his Eſſay on Man, in another place, ſufficiently demonſtrates:

> And more true joy Marcellus exil'd feels,
> Than Cæſar with a ſenate *at his heels*.

The people of all claſſes are indeed ſo variable in their opinions, ſo prompt extravagantly to applaud, and capriciouſly to cenſure, that a popular man may fairly conſider his reputation as a cloud before the wind, perpetually varying its form, now increaſing, now diminiſhing, and at length diſperſed in air.

> Forbad to wade through ſlaughter to a throne,
> And ſhut the gates of mercy on mankind.

The image of wading through blood, has no great claim to novelty; but it is introduced with dignity and propriety. There is ſufficient analogy between him who ſhould literally wade through blood to a throne,

throne conſidered as a local eminence; and him by whoſe command blood is ſhed, in order for his obtainment of political ſuperiority. The image in the next line is equally grand and appoſite; a tyrant's inflexibility, could not, perhaps, have been deſcribed with more force, than by ſaying he '*ſhut the gates of mercy on man-*' *kind.*'

> Or heap the ſhrine of Luxury and Pride,
> With incenſe kindled at the Muſe's flame.

The metaphors here are common, but they are not unpleaſingly applied. The '*Muſe's flame kindles incenſe*;' that is, Poetical genius offers flattery at the ſhrine of Luxury and Pride. *Shrine*, by a bold *licentia poetica*, is here ſubſtituted for *altar*. Dr. Johnſon defines a ſhrine, '*a caſe in which ſomething ſacred is repo-*' *ſited*;' a ſhrine conſequently cannot properly be ſaid to be heaped at all, and much leſs properly with incenſe; an altar

altar is the place appropriated to that material.* The Muſe's flame here mentioned, has not, however, very often kindled the incenſe which has heaped the altars of Luxury and Pride; Poetry has had little concern with the volumes of rhyming praiſe that have iſſued from the preſs; Dryden's adulatory pieces, ſome of them at leaſt, excepted. Maſon, in one of his Elegies, has finely characterized that Author, and with a metaphor leſs common and more beautiful than Gray's, has repreſented him as crowning the ſubjects of his applauſe with jewels:

If POPE through friendſhip fail'd, indignant view,
Yet pity DRYDEN; hark, where'er he ſings,
How adulation drops her courtly dew
On titled rhymers and inglorious kings.

See from the depths of his exhauſtleſs mine,
His glittering ſtores the tuneful ſpendthrift throws,

* With our minor Poets and Poeteſſes, the words *fane, ſhrine, altar,* &c. are perpetually in uſe, and are as perpetually miſapplied and confounded by them.

As

As fear or intereſt bids, behold they ſhrine,
Now deck a CROMWELL's, now a CHARLES's brows.

ELEGY to a YOUNG NOBLEMAN.

V. 73. Far from the madding crowd's ignoble ſtrife,
Their ſober wiſhes never learn'd to ſtray;
Along the cool ſequeſter'd vale of life,
They kept the noiſeleſs tenor of their way.

To a reader, who does not think while he reads, there is an ambiguity in this paſſage, which may lead to a ſenſe contrary to the real one. The author ſuppoſes, that his peaſants were ſituated remote from the '*crowd's ignoble ſtrife*,' and that their wiſhes never ſtrayed towards it. The pronoun perſonal, '*They*,' with which *far* the adverb of ſituation ſhould have connected, being not expreſſed, but only underſtood, that adverb may be erroneouſly combined with *wiſhes*, and of courſe it may be abſurdly thought, that the ruſtick's deſires, inſtead of never extending to the tumult

tumult of publick life, had never extended beyond it. There is here alſo a trifling incongruity of ſentiment; that ardour of action which had before been pointed out as *glorious*, is here inadvertently termed *ignoble*. The two laſt lines of the ſtanza, '*Along the cool*, '*&c.*' are a kind of obſcure or indirect alluſion, or ſimile:—the perſons in queſtion, *held their quiet even courſe through the world, like a ſilent ſtream through a cool and ſolitary valley*. The idea of the peaſants being contented with their ſituation, is poetically pleaſing, but not juſt. There is perhaps no claſs of men, on the whole, more diſſatisfied with its condition, or whoſe wiſhes are more perpetually ſtraying to the condition of others, than this. The gentleman, the clergyman, the opulent farmer, and the tradeſman, are the conſtant objects of the ruſtick's envy; ſuch, alas, is unhappy human nature!

V. 77. Yet ev'n theſe bones from inſult to protect,
Some frail memorial ſtill erected nigh,
With uncouth rhyme and ſhapeleſs ſculpture deck'd,
Implores the paſſing tribute of a ſigh.

Their name, their years, ſpelt by th' unletter'd Muſe,
The place of fame and elegy ſupply;
And many a holy text around ſhe ſtrews,
That teach the ruſtick moraliſt to die.

For who, to dumb Forgetfulneſs a prey,
This pleaſing anxious being e'er reſign'd;
Left the warm precincts of the chearful day,
Nor caſt one longing ling'ring look behind?

On ſome fond breaſt the parting ſoul relies,
Some pious drops the cloſing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
Ev'n in our aſhes live their wonted fires.

The great merit of a poet is not, like Cowley, Donne, and Denham, to ſay what no man but himſelf has thought, but what every man but himſelf has thought, but no man expreſſed, or at leaſt expreſſed ſo well. Dr. Johnſon has,

has, with great juſtice, allowed the originality of the above ſtanzas; 'I have 'never,' ſays he, 'ſeen the notions in 'any other place; yet he that reads 'them here, perſuades himſelf that he 'has always felt them.'

The general ſight of a Cemetery, naturally affects the mind with an unmixed and painful melancholy; it produces gloomy reflections on the end of all things, regret for others, or apprehenſion for ourſelves; but the Unlettered Muſe, with her little narratives, often introduces other ideas; her language is ſometimes ſo abſurd, that in a leſs ſerious ſituation, it would excite riſibility; and her tale is ſometimes ſo pathetically circumſtantial, that it awakens all our tenderneſs.

Nothing can be more noble, nothing can be more beautiful, and yet nothing

more ſimple and intelligible, than the firſt three ſtanzas of the above quotation, '*Yet ev'n theſe bones, &c.*' and they are ſo correct, that they have not an epithet but what adds force to the ſenſe, nor a rhyme that obſcures or weakens it. The fourth ſtanza, '*On ſome fond breaſt, &c.*' at leaſt the latter part of it, is not quite perſpicuous. When the Poet tells us that the parting ſoul, or expiring perſon, relies on ſome fond breaſt, ſome affectionate relative, we underſtand that it ſo relies for commemoration; but what is intended by theſe lines ſeems rather doubtful:

Ev'n from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
Ev'n in our aſhes live their wonted fires.

The ancients, it is well known, were anxious, to an extreme, for funeral honours: they even ſuppoſed that the ſpirits of the deceaſed could not reſt, till the rites of ſepulture were performed.*

* See this opinion finely exemplified in the ſtory of Patroclus. Iliad, Book 23.

Perhaps

Perhaps our author, with the licence of a poet, here adopts this claſſical opinion. If this was not his idea, it is difficult to ſay what could be. 'The *voice of Na-* 'ture,'* in the boſoms of the living, might indeed, be ſaid to cry, or call for ſuch tokens of regard to the dead, as we imagine may be acceptable to them; but this ſenſe it is evident was not intended here, for if it was, the voice of nature could not be ſaid to cry '*from the tomb.*'

Antiquity held another doctrine, which alſo ſeems here to be alluded to, viz. that, after death, the ſoul retained its uſual paſſions and affections, and conſequently might look to the objects of theſe paſſions or affections for proofs of their tender remembrance. Mr. Maſon, who allows the paſſage to be obſcure, thinks this to be the meaning. 'He meant to 'ſay,' ſays he (ſpeaking of the poet) 'that 'we wiſh to be remembered by our

* A poetical phraſe for the dictates of natural affection.

'friends after our death, in the ſame 'manner, as, when alive, we wiſhed to 'be remembered by them in our ab-'ſence.'

The above-mentioned ingenious Writer has given two variations of the laſt line, one as it ſtood in the firſt edition, and one of his own propoſing:

Awake, and faithful to her wonted fires.—
Awake, and faithful to her firſt deſires.—

Theſe alterations, however, ſeem not to render the ſenſe much clearer; the laſt is indeed the ſimpleſt, becauſe it drops the metaphor.

Ev'n in our aſhes live their wonted fires.

This line, which is an avowed imitation of Petrarch,* inculcates the idea of a poſthumous connexion of the intellectual and corporeal part of man; the

* Son. 169.

ſpirit

ſpirit is ſuppoſed to be ſome how combined with, or concealed under, the duſt, like fire in embers. Dr. Young, in a verſe, which, from his aukward introduction of the verb *ſlumbers*, has puzzled many a juvenile reader, ſeems to reprobate this idea:

Why then their loſs deplore, that are not loſt?
Why wanders wretched thought their tombs around,
In infidel diſtreſs? Are angels there?
Slumbers,* *rak'd* up in duſt, æthereal fire?

V. 93. For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
Doſt in theſe lines their artleſs tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred ſpirit may inquire thy fate,

* This verb, by being uſed in the ſingular at the opening of the line, ſo reſembles the noun plural, that, without attention to the note of interrogation, we might miſtake and make the line nonſenſe. The uſe of the auxiliary *can*, would deſtroy the ambiguity, render the culinary term *rak'd*, unneceſſary, and improve the melody of the line:

Can fires æthereal ſlumber in the duſt?

Haply, ſome hoary-headed ſwain may ſay;
'Oft have we ſeen him at the peep of dawn,
'Bruſhing with haſty ſteps the dews away,
'To meet the ſun upon the upland lawn.'

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech,
'That wreathes its old fantaſtic roots ſo
'high,
'His liſtleſs length at noontide would he
'ſtretch,
'And pore upon the brook that babbles by.'

'Hard by yon wood, now ſmiling as in ſcorn,
'Muttering his wayward fancies he would
'rove;
'Now drooping, woeful, wan, like one for-
'lorn,
'Or craz'd with care, or croſs'd in hope-
'leſs love.'

Gray, in one of his letters, perhaps too precipitately, aſſerts, that deſcription (by which he doubtleſs meant deſcription of rural ſcenery) never ought to make the ſubject of poetry; but he admits it to be its moſt graceful ornament; and both at the beginning, and towards the cloſe of this beautiful Elegy, has moſt advantage-

advantageouſly availed himſelf of it. Thoſe Criticks, who have denied this Poem the merit of a general plan, have miſtaken general plan for proper diſpoſition of particular parts; the former, as has been ſhewn, it really poſſeſſes; in the latter, I have already noticed a deficiency. Here is another inſtance, wherein a ſimple tranſpoſition would, at leaſt in my opinion, produce a very conſiderable improvement. The Poet's morning perambulation is narrated in this ſtanza, '*Haply, ſome hoary-headed ſwain, &c.*' his noontide repoſe is deſcribed in the next, and he is introduced in the laſt, though without ſpecification of time, reſuming his walk again. Had the firſt and third ſtanzas been brought together, the unity of action would have been preſerved uninterrupted; the morning wanderings would have been connected in one point of view, and the noon-day reſt have naturally followed them; for inſtance:

'Haply, ſome hoary-headed ſwain may ſay;
'Oft have we ſeen him at the peep of dawn,
'Bruſhing with haſty ſteps the dews away,
'To meet the ſun upon the upland lawn.'

'Hard by yon wood, now ſmiling as in ſcorn,
'Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
'Now drooping, woeful, wan, like one forlorn,
'Or craz'd with care, or croſs'd in hopeleſs love.'

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech,
'That wreathes its old fantaſtic roots ſo high,
'His liſtleſs length at noontide would he ſtretch,
'And pore upon the brook that babbles by.'

Theſe ſtanzas have great merit. The rapid tranſitions of thought in the mind of a poet, as indicated in external action, are painted in the moſt lively manner. The rural imagery has an air of novelty; and the beach, with its old fantaſtick roots, hanging over the rill, is a complete picture. Mr. Maſon obſerves of the language in this part, that it has a dorick delicacy. It has, indeed, what I ſhould rather term a happy ruſticity, undegraded

degraded by meanneſs: from ſuch a character as is repreſented ſpeaking, '*a hoary-headed ſwain*,' one ſhould reaſonably expect ſuch phraſes as theſe, '*Hard by yon wood, &c.*' '*wayward fancies*,' '*woeful wan*,' '*one forlorn*,' '*craz'd with care*,' '*croſs'd with love, &c.*'

The ſame Gentleman has favoured us with a ſtanza, which, in Gray's M.S. immediately ſucceeded the above, and which he rather wonders the Poet ſhould have ſuppreſſed, as it would have completed the account of his whole day, whereas evening is now omitted:

Him have we ſeen the green-wood ſide along,
While o'er the heath we hied our labour done;
Oft as the woodlark *pip'd* her farewell ſong,
With wiſtful eyes purſue the ſetting ſun.

The ſtanza, conſidered in itſelf, is not a bad one; but Gray was right in ſuppreſſing it, and I think it is eaſy to conjecture ſome of the reaſons for its ſuppreſſion.

preſſion. The Poet's evening had been deſcribed before, at the opening of the Poem; to have deſcribed it again, would have been ſuperfluous, and an inſtance of that diſguſting redundance, which is ſure to create confuſion, and which we always meet with in the works of common writers. Diverſity of ſituation alſo is wanting; we had the *wood* before, '*Hard by yon wood*;' and now we have it again, '*The green-wood* '*ſide along, &c.*' There is, indeed, a kind of contraſt, or antitheſis, between the idea in one of the former ſtanzas, of the poet going out to meet the ſun at its riſe, and the idea in this ſtanza, of his viewing it with wiſtful or regretful eyes when ſetting; but this contraſt, as it is here managed, does not pleaſe; the mention of the ſun by name twice, at leaſt in its preſent poſition, has too much ſameneſs to be agreeable.

V. 109. One morn I miſs'd him on the'ccuſtom'd hill,
Along the *heath*, and near his favourite tree;
Another

Another came; nor yet beſide the rill,
Nor up the *lawn*, nor at the *wood* was he.

The foregoing ſtanzas, p. 230, '*Haply*, '*ſome hoary-headed ſwain*, *&c.*' contain ſubjects which ought to have been regularly and diſtinctly recapitulated or contraſted in this concluſion. This however is not the caſe. The '*upland lawn*,' in the firſt ſtanza, and the '*nodding* '*beech*;' and the '*brook*,' in the ſecond, are well enough oppoſed by the '*cuſtom'd* '*hill*,' the '*favourite tree*,' and the '*rill*,' in the firſt, ſecond, and third lines here; but the '*lawn*,' to which '*cuſtom'd hill*,' had already correſponded, is now redundantly introduced again by its own appellation, and the '*wood*,' which would have been more conſiſtently expreſſed by ſome ſynonymous term, is likewiſe ſimply mentioned by name. The '*heath*,' is a new and ſuperfluous image. Theſe it may be ſaid are trifles, ſcarcely worth notice; but if ſuch trifles were more regarded, compoſition would make nearer

nearer approaches to perfection. The following arrangement is ſubmitted to the Reader merely as explanatory of my own ideas:

Haply, ſome hoary-headed ſwain may ſay;
Oft have we ſeen him at the peep of dawn,
Bruſhing with haſty ſteps the dews away,
To meet the ſun upon the *upland lawn:*

Hard by yon *wood*, now ſmiling as in ſcorn,
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove;
Now drooping, woeful, wan, like one forlorn,
Or craz'd with care, or croſs'd in hopeleſs love.

There, at the foot of *yonder nodding beach*,
That wreathes its old fantaſtic roots ſo high;
His liſtleſs length at noontide would he ſtretch,
And pore upon the *brook* that babbles by.

One morn I miſs'd him on the *cuſtom'd hill*,
Along the *copſe*, and near his *favourite tree*;
There came another, and another ſtill;
Nor at the *grove*, nor by the *rill*, was he.

The firſt half of the laſt ſtanza, has here a proper relation to all the preceding objects, except the *brook*; the '*upland lawn*,' is contraſted by the '*hill*,' the '*wood*' by the '*copſe*,' and the '*beach*' by the '*tree*:' the

the ſecond half introduces only the *wood*, under the appellation of *grove*; and for the firſt time, contraſts the *brook* by the denomination of *rill*. Theſe variations, however, do not obtain all the regularity that might be wiſhed for; but perhaps they have as much as could be obtained in the ſame compaſs. The third line, '*There came another, &c.*' ſome may think rather injured in ſtrength and ſweetneſs by the alteration.

V. 113. The next, with dirges due in ſad array,
Slow through the church-way path we ſaw him borne.
Approach, and read, (for thou canſt read) the lay,
Grav'd on the ſtone beneath that aged thorn.

I once heard it obſerved by a very ingenious Gentleman, that in Spenſer's Fairy Queen, and Fairfax's Taſſo, may be found almoſt every modern melody, every pleaſing diſpoſition of words in uſe with the poets of the preſent day. This

This is certain, that in different authors, we often meet with the ſame turns of expreſſion, which nevertheleſs is no proof of imitation. The ſentiment in this line, '*Approach and read*' (*for thou canſt read*) '*the lay*,' undoubtedly produced the words, without adverſion to the language of any preceding writer; for to convey it in words more natural, is not poſſible: yet ſome may imagine they have found its prototype in this of Dr. Young;

And ſteal (for you can ſteal) celeſtial fire.

In ſome of the early editions of the Elegy, after the ſtanza laſt quoted, the following was inſerted:

There, ſcatter'd oft the earlieſt of the year,
By hands unſeen are *ſhowers* of *violets* found;
The red breaſt loves to build and warble there,
And little footſteps lightly print the ground.

Mr. Maſon, who thinks theſe lines very fine, nevertheleſs thinks they were very properly

properly omitted, becauſe they made the parentheſis too long. They had, indeed, this bad effect; but there were, I think, other cauſes for their rejection. The preceding ſtanza, '*The next* '*with dirges, &c.*' and this, are totally different in character; that is ſerious, this is trifling; that deals in real fact, this in puerile fancies: the addition was like that of a Chineſe roof to a Tuſcan column. Theſe corrections of Gray's, together with many hints in his letters, have convinced me that his poetical powers, however great, were not ſuperior to his critical ſkill.

EPITAPH.

Here reſts his head upon the lap of earth,*
A youth, to fortune, and to fame, unknown.
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his ſoul ſincere;
Heav'n did a recompence as largely ſend:

——— * How glad would lay me down,
As in my mother's lap.——
Paradiſe Loſt, B. 10, p. 777.

He

He gave to miſery, all he had, a tear;
He gain'd from heav'n ('twas all he wiſh'd) a friend.

No farther ſeek his merits to diſcloſe,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode;
(There they alike in trembling hope repoſe)
The boſom of his father, and his God.

Reſpecting this Epitaph, of the two firſt ſtanzas, little need be ſaid; they are both correct; the firſt is elegant and ſimple, the ſecond is not totally clear of affectation. The turn of wit, by which the poet's '*large bounty*' is diſcovered to be only a '*tear*,' and his '*recompence*' is found in '*friendſhip*,' is certainly unexpected, and perhaps too refined for the occaſion. To the third ſtanza, the Minor Critick, before quoted, ſtrongly objects. "If it has any meaning," ſays he, "it can mean nothing but this," "that "it is improper to examine the merits "or frailties of the perſon deceaſed, "ſince they are both alike repoſed in "one

" one dread abode, the boſom of his " father and his God." ' This is the ' firſt time,' continues he, ' I ever heard ' of a human creature making the bo- ' ſom of his deity a repoſitory for his ' errors; and in the preſent caſe, I ' think the fault more inexcuſable, be- ' cauſe the violence offered to reaſon and ' religion, has no way aſſiſted the poe- ' try, this being perhaps as lame a paſ- ' ſage as any in the whole piece.'* This ſevere cenſure is unmerited: univerſal cuſtom has eſtabliſhed and authorized the ſubſtitution, however violent or awkward, of *boſom* for *mind*; and taking the word in that ſenſe, the paſſage is defenſible, and intends no more than this: " That the merits and " defects of the party in queſtion " were known to his maker, which was " ſufficient." What violence is here committed, either againſt reaſon or re-

* The Babler, vol. 1. p. 241.

ligion, it is not eaſy to diſcover. That the lines convey no new information; that they tell nothing but what every man muſt know, is indeed evident; and that, conſidered as poetry, they have no very conſpicuous excellence, is certain.

The attention that has been paid to this Elegy, however particular, will not, it is hoped, be thought tedious or ſuperfluous. The Poem itſelf is, perhaps, the firſt of the kind in any language: its ſubject, like the ſubject of Milton's Epic, is univerſally intereſting; the allegorical imagery is ſublime, and the natural deſcription graphical; the ſentiment is moſtly ſimple and pathetick, and the verſe has a melody which has not often been attained, and cannot be ſurpaſſed.

Gray's Poems are not numerous; but all of them, at leaſt his ſerious Pieces,* have

* GRAY's talents were indeed confined to the ſerious. In the few Pieces he has given us of a light caſt, both in proſe

have great merit; and whoever writes but as correctly as he has written, will not find himſelf able to write much: happily, however, for ſome authors, it is often the bulk, rather than the correctneſs of productions, that now confers popularity.

The Church-Yard Elegy, as Mr. Maſon juſtly obſerves, was Gray's moſt popular production. His two Greater Odes have been accuſed of obſcurity; but one can be obſcure to thoſe only, who have not read Pindar; and the other, only to thoſe, who are unacquainted with the hiſtory of our own nation. But it is needleſs to enlarge on theſe, as ample juſtice has been very lately done them by my friend Mr. Potter, the juſtly celebrated tranſlator of Eſchylus and Euripides.*

There

proſe and verſe, in his Long Story, his Drowned Cat, and in ſome of his Letters, the humour is at beſt faint, and often puerile.

* I cannot here forbear tranſcribing a paſſage from GRAY's works, which Mr. MASON thinks was proba-

There is mention made, in Mr. Maſon's Edition, of an intention of ſetting the ſecond of theſe Odes to muſick, in the manner of an Oratorio; and ſome of Gray's ideas on the ſubject are there preſerved. My knowledge of muſick is but ſuperficial; but I lament that this deſign did not take place, as I think it would have afforded an opportunity of conveying whatever ſound can convey, of the ſublime and pathetick. Dryden's

bly written, on occaſion of the common preference given to his Elegy. To the doctrine it contains, I yield my moſt hearty aſſent. "The Gout de Comparaiſon, as "BRUYERE ſtiles it, is the only taſte of ordinary "minds. They do not know the ſpecific excellency, "either of an author or a compoſition: for inſtance, "they do not know that TIBULLUS ſpoke the language "of nature and love; that HORACE ſaw the vanities "and follies of mankind with the moſt penetrating "eye, and touched them to the quick; that VIRGIL "ennobled even the moſt common images, by the graces "of a glowing, melodious, and well adapted expreſ-"ſion: but they do know that VIRGIL was a better "Poet than HORACE, and that HORACE's Epiſtles do "not run ſo well as the Elegies of TIBULLUS."

famous

famous paſſage, ‘ *See the Furies ariſe,*’ &c. might perhaps be rivalled for animation of imagery by the concluſion of the ſecond ſtrophe,

She wolf of France, with unrelenting fangs,
That tear'ſt the bowels of thy mangled mate,
From thee be born, who o'er thy country hangs,
The ſcourge of heav'n. What terrors round him
wait!
Amazement in his van, with flight combin'd,
And ſorrow's faded form and ſolitude behind.

The above Author's ‘ *Fallen! Fallen!* ‘ *Fallen!*’ might alſo poſſibly have its parallel for mournful melody in the opening of the ſecond antiſtrophe,

Mighty victor, mighty Lord,
Low on his funereal couch he lies!
No pitying heart, no eye afford
A tear to grace his obſequies.
Is the ſable warrior fled?
Thy ſon is gone. He reſts among the dead!—

There might likewiſe be a fine tranſition from this pathetick to the exult-

ant, in

Fair laughs the morn, and ſoft the zephir blows, &c.

But hints of this kind are unneceſſary; Oratorios, and almoſt every thing elſe that is ſerious, are now out of faſhion.

I mentioned the Paper in the Babbler as the only profeſſed Criticiſm on Gray's Elegy. I have ſince ſeen a pamphlet intitled, "A Criticiſm on the Elegy "written in a Country Church-Yard," in which that Poem ſeems to have been examined on principles very diſſimilar to mine.

ESSAY

ESSAY VIII.

On GOLDSMITH'S DESERTED VILLAGE.

THE Temple of Fame, lately erected under the title of The Works of the Engliſh Poets, affords a ſtriking inſtance of caprice in the matter of admiſſion to literary honours. Had Criticiſm, rational impartial criticiſm, kept the gate of this temple, ſeveral names which now appear within its walls, would certainly never have appeared there. But to drop the allegory, and change an imaginary edifice for a real

book, it is difficult to gueſs the reaſon why that book admitted ſome authors, while others of ſimilar character were rejected.

Poet is an appellation frequently uſed, without the annexion of its preciſe idea; which ſeems to be that of a perſon who combines pictureſque imagery, and intereſting ſentiment, and conveys them in melodious and regularly meaſured language. This is a definition, which will exclude the writer of Romances, and Proſe Dramas, however ſublime or pathetick, on the one hand; and the meer maker of Verſes, however humorous or witty, on the other: were indeed the claim of either to be allowed, it muſt be that of the former; inaſmuch as poetry muſt be nearer allied to the dignified and elegant, than to the mean and indelicate.

The

The title of Poet has been often beſtowed on thoſe who little deſerved it. The name of Engliſh Claſſicks was ſurely ill-merited, either by the Wits of Charles's days, that "mob of gentlemen who wrote with eaſe," or by the heroes of the Dunciad; their compoſitions were moſtly trifling, and frequently immoral, and conſequently unworthy of preſervation. But in an Edition of poetry, where ſome of theſe are to be found, we rather wonder at not finding the others; where Rocheſter and Roſcommon, Sprat, Halliſax, Stepney, and Duke, were received, why Carew, and Sedley, and Hopkins, were refuſed, one is puzzled to gueſs; and when Pomfret and Yalden are preferred to Euſden and Duck, it is not eaſy to account for the preference. The managers of this celebrated Edition, as their work approached the preſent period, ſeem to have been more faſtidious in their choice, and have omitted Writers who would have done their collection

collection no diſcredit.* When the Publication was undertaken, Armſtrong and Langhorne, poets of ſuperior rank, were living; their works, conſequently, could not be properly inſerted; but Goldſmith was dead, and his certainly had a juſt claim to admiſſion.

Goldſmith's Deſerted Village, the work now under conſideration, is a performance of diſtinguiſhed merit. The general idea it inculcates is this; that commerce, by an enormous introduction of wealth, has augmented the number of the rich, who by exhauſting the proviſion of the poor, reduce them to the neceſſity of emigration. This principle

* Among ſuch may be reckoned AARON HILL, who although in general a bombaſtick writer, produced ſome Pieces of merit, particularly the CAVRAT, an allegorical ſatire on Pope: ROBERT DODSLEY, author of Cleone, a Tragedy, and a Didactick Poem on Agriculture, intitled Publick Virtue: GRAINGER, tranſlator of Tibullus, and author of another Didactick, called the Sugar Cane: CAWTHORN, author of Abelard to Eloiſa, &c. &c.

is exemplified in the deſcription of Auburn, a Country Village, once populous and flouriſhing, afterwards deſerted and in ruins.

Modern poetry has, in general, one common defect, viz. the want of proper arrangement. There are many poems, whoſe component parts reſemble a number of fine paintings, which have ſome connexion with each other, but are not placed in any regular ſeries. The Deſerted Village would have pleaſed me better, if all the circumſtances relative to Auburn the inhabited, had been grouped in one picture; and all thoſe relative to Auburn the deſerted, in another. The Author's plan is more deſultory; he gives us, alternately, contraſted ſketches of the ſuppoſed place in its two different ſituations:

The Poem opens with an apoſtrophe to its ſubject:

V. 1. Sweet Auburn, *loveliest* village of the plain,
Where health and plenty chear'd the *labouring* swain;
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd.
Dear *lovely bowers* of innocence and *ease*,
Seats of my youth, when ev'ry *sport* could please;
How often have I loiter'd on thy green,
Where humble happiness endear'd each scene.
How often have I paus'd on every charm,
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm;
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church, that topt the neighb'ring hill.
The hawthorn bush, with seats *beneath the shade*,
For talking age, and whispering lovers made!
How often have I blest the coming day,
When *toil remitting* lent its turn to play,
And all the village train from *labour free*,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old survey'd;
And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground,
And slights of art, and feats of strength went round.
And still as each *repeated pleasure* tir'd,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band *inspir'd*;
The dancing pair, that simply sought renown
By holding out to tire each other down;

The

The ſwain miſtruſtleſs of his ſmutted face,
While ſecret laughter titter'd round the place;
The baſhful virgin's ſide-long looks of love,
The matron's glance, that would thoſe looks reprove;
Theſe were thy charms *ſweet* village; *ſports* like theſe
With *ſweet ſucceſſion taught e'en toil to pleaſe*;
Theſe round thy *bowers* thy chearful influence ſhed,
Theſe were thy charms—But all theſe charms are fled.

This paſſage is one of that kind, with which the imagination may be pleaſed, but which will not fully ſatisfy the judgment. The four lines, '*Dear lovely bowers*,' &c. might perhaps have been ſpared. The village diverſions are inſiſted on with too much prolixity. They are deſcribed firſt with a puerile generality, redundance, and confuſion: they are *ſports*, and *paſtimes*, and *gambols*, and *ſlights of art*, and *feats of ſtrength*; and they are repreſented ſometimes as paſſive, the 'ſports are *led up*;' ſometimes as active, the

the 'paſtimes *circle*,' and the gambols '*frolick*,' and the 'ſlights and feats *go* '*round*.' But we are perhaps fully recompenſed for this, by the claſſical and beautiful particularity and conciſeneſs of the context, '*the dancing pair*,' '*the* '*ſwain miſtruſtleſs of his ſmutted face*,' the '*baſhful virgin's looks, &c.*' The paragraph in general has much inaccuracy, eſpecially a diſguſting identity of diction; the word '*bowers*,' occurs twice, the word '*ſweet*,' thrice, and '*charms*,' and '*ſport*,' ſingular or plural, four times. We have alſo '*toil* '*remitting*,' and '*toil taught to pleaſe*,' '*ſucceeding ſports*,' and '*ſports with* '*ſweet ſucceſſion*.'

V. 35. *Sweet ſmiling* village, *loveliеſt of the lawn*,
Thy *ſports* are fled, and all thy *charms* withdrawn;
Amidſt thy *bow'rs* the *tyrant's hand* is ſeen,
And *deſolation ſaddens all thy green*:
One only maſter graſps the whole domain,
And half a tillage ſtints thy *ſmiling* plain;

No

No more thy glaſſy brook reflects the day,
But chok'd with ſedges, works its weedy way.
Along the glades a ſolitary gueſt,
The hollow-ſounding bittern guards its neſt;
Amidſt thy deſert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with repeated cries.
Sunk are thy *bowers* in ſhapeleſs ruin all,
And the long graſs o'er tops the mould'ring wall,
And trembling, ſhrinking, from the ſpoiler's hand,
Far, far away thy children leave the land.

The paſſage already examined, and this, have both the ſame character of verboſity. There is a repetition which indicates intention, and maintains regularity; and there is a repetition which diſcovers either careleſſneſs, or poverty of language. Auburn had before, l. 1. been termed '*ſweet*,' and '*the loveliеſt village of the plain*;' it is now termed '*ſweet*,' and '*ſmiling*,' and '*the loveliеſt of the lawn*.' We had been told, l. 34. that '*all its charms were fled*;' and we are now told that '*its ſports are fled*,

'*fled, and its charms withdrawn.*' The '*tyrant's hand,*' ſeems mentioned rather too abruptly; and '*deſolation ſaddening* '*the green,*' is common place phraſeology. The eight lines, '*No more the* '*glaſſy brook, &c.*' are natural and beautiful; but the next two, '*And trembling,* '*ſhrinking, &c.*' are ill-placed, for they prematurely introduce the ſubject of emigration.

V. 51. *Ill* fares the land, to haſtening *ills* a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;
Princes and lords may flouriſh, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peaſantry, their country's pride,
When once deſtroy'd can never be ſupply'd.

A time there was, e're England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintain'd its man;
For him light labour ſpread her wholeſome ſtore,
Juſt gave what life requir'd but gave no more:
His beſt companions innocence and health,
And his beſt riches ignorance of wealth.

The

The firſt of theſe paragraphs, '*Ill fares* '*the land, &c.*' with all its merit, which is great, for the ſentiment is noble, and the expreſſion little inferior, ſeems rather out of place; after the affair of depopulation had been more fully deſcribed, it might have appeared to advantage as a concluding reflection. The ſecond aſſerts what has been repeatedly denied, that '*there was a time in England, when* '*every rood of ground maintained its man.*' If however ſuch a time ever was, it could not be ſo recent as when the Deſerted Village was flouriſhing, a circumſtance ſuppoſed to exiſt within the remembrance of the poet; conſequently the idea had no buſineſs in the poem.

V. 63. But times are alter'd; trade's unfeeling train,
Uſurp the land, and diſpoſſeſs the ſwain;
Along the lawn, where ſcatter'd hamlets roſe,
Unweildly wealth, and cumb'rous pomp repoſe;
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.

Thoſe *gentle hours* that plenty bade to *bloom*,
Thoſe calm deſires that aſk'd but little room,
Thoſe healthful *ſports* that grac'd the peaceful ſcene,
Liv'd in each *look*, and *brighten'd* all the green;
Theſe far-departing, ſeek a kinder ſhore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

This paſſage is a mere ſuperfluity. The firſt ſix lines, '*But times are alter'd,*' might have been reſerved for introduction in ſome other part of the piece. The next, '*Theſe gentle hours, &c.*' ſhould have been totally ſuppreſſed: '*gentle hours* that *are bade to bloom,*' and '*healthful ſports* that *live* in *looks*, and '*brighten a green*;' is certainly not vindicable language. The '*hours,*' and the '*ſports*' alſo, are ſaid to '*ſeek a kinder* '*ſhore,*' which '*kinder ſhore,*' is inconſiſtently deſcribed in the ſequel of the poem, as fraught with every inconvenience and every danger. The mention of the '*ſports,*' and of the emigration,

'*Theſe*

'*Theſe far-departing, &c.*' is here again unneceſſarily repeated.

V. 74. *Sweet* Auburn! parent of the bliſsful hour,
Thy glades forlorn confeſs the *tyrant's* power.
Here as I take my ſolitary rounds,
Amidſt thy tangling walks, and ruin'd grounds,
And, many a year elaps'd, return to view,
Where once the cottage ſtood the hawthorn grew,
Here, as with doubtful, penſive ſteps I range,
Trace every ſcene, and wonder at the change,*
Remembrance wakes with all her buſy train,
Swells at my breaſt, and turns the paſt to pain.

The adjective '*ſweet*,' is frequently, and very properly, in uſe as a ſubſtitute for agreeable or pleaſant, but it diſpleaſes in this work by perpetual repetition. The obſcure and indefinite idea of a '*Tyrant*,' recurs alſo unneceſſarily here again. There is pathos in the lines, '*And many*

* An unquam patrios longo poſt tempore fines,
Pauperis et tuguri congeſtum ceſpite culmen,
Poſt aliquot mea regna videns mirabor ariſtas?
VIRG.

'*a year, &c.*' but they are as evidently miſplaced as ſome of their predeceſſors: we wiſh to hear more of the Village in its proſperity, before we hear ſo much of its deſolation.

Subſequent to the above, we have an expatiation on the Author's fallacious hope of concluding his days at his favourite Auburn, and a paragraph in praiſe of retirement; both well written, but rather epiſodical.

V. 115. *Sweet* was the ſound, when oft at ev'ning's cloſe,
Up yonder hill the village murmur roſe;
There as I paſt with careleſs ſteps, and ſlow,
The mingled notes came ſoften'd from below;
The ſwain reſponſive as the milk-maid ſung,
The *ſober* herd that low'd to meet their young;
The noiſy geeſe that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children juſt *let looſe* from ſchool;
The watch dog's voice, that bay'd the whiſp-'ring wind,
And the loud laugh, that ſpoke the vacant mind;

Theſe

Theſe all in ſoft confuſion *ſought the ſhade*,*
And fill'd each pauſe the nightingale had made.
But now the ſounds of population fail,
No chearful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
No buſy ſteps the graſs-grown footway tread,
But all the *bloomy flush of life is fled.*
All but yon widow'd ſolitary thing,
That feebly bends beſide the plaſhy ſpring;
She wretched matron, forc'd, in age, for bread,
To ſtrip the brook with mantling creſſes ſpread,
To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
To ſeek her nightly ſhade, and *weep till morn*;
She only left of all the harmleſs train,
The ſad hiſtorian of the *penſive* plain.

This is indeed a paſſage of uncommon merit. The circumſtances it deſcribes are obvious in nature, but new in poetry; and they are deſcribed with great force and elegance. Milton, in a ſimile,

* The village murmur, l. 116, is ſaid '*to have riſen* '*up the hill*;' it is now ſaid to have '*ſought the ſhade.*' This ſeems at firſt ſight an inconſiſtency, but perhaps the poet may be vindicated by ſuppoſing that the hill, like many other hills, was ſhaded with trees. Perhaps if a rhyme had not been wanted, we ſhould not have met with the word '*ſhade*,' on this occaſion.

which he thought capable of illuſtrating the idea of an Eden, among other objects of delight has introduced

Each rural ſight, each rural ſound.—

The Epic Poet, however, only mentions ſound in the general, but our Author deſcends to particulars, and thoſe particulars are moſt happily ſelected; they bear one uniform conſiſtent character, viz. that of a ſober or ſerene chearfulneſs. The locality given by the intimation, that they were heard '*from be-* '*low,*' has a fine effect. In Paradiſe Loſt, b. v. l. 547. we have a beautiful inſtance of the ſame kind:

Cherubic ſongs, by night from neighb'ring hills,
Aerial muſic ſend. *——

The *Matron gathering water-creſſes,* is a fine picture; but there is unnatu-

* The ſituation is here reverſed, the ſongs proceed from above.

ral

ral exaggeration in repreſenting her as *'weeping,'* every night, *'till morning;'* ſudden calamity occaſions violent emotions, but habitual hardſhip will not produce inceſſant ſorrow; time reconciles us to the moſt diſagreeable ſituations. Our Author's language in this place, is alſo very defective in correctneſs. After mentioning the general privation of the *'bloomy fluſh of life,'* the exceptionary, *'all but,'* includes, as part of that *'bloomy fluſh,'* an *'aged de-'crepid matron;'* that is to ſay, in plain proſe, *'the bloomy fluſh of life is all fled 'but one old woman.'*

The Poet now recurs again to the paſt. When Auburn is deſcribed as flouriſhing, its Clergyman as a principal inhabitant, is very properly introduced. This ſuppoſed Village Paſtor, is characterized in a manner which ſeems almoſt unexceptionable, both for ſentiment and expreſſion. His contentment,

hoſpitality, and piety, are pointed out with ſufficient particularity, yet without confuſion or redundance. Where indiſcriminate approbation can be hazarded, quotation is the leſs neceſſary; but probably few readers will think the following extracts tedious.

> Near yonder copſe, where once the garden ſmil'd,
> And ſtill where many a garden flower grows wild;
> There, where a few torn ſhrubs the place diſcloſe,
> The village preacher's modeſt manſion roſe.

This is a fine natural ſtroke.—We ſee the '*copſe*,' the '*torn ſhrubs*,' and the '*ſcatter'd flowers*.' The laſt remaining veſtige of what was once a garden, is always the '*garden flower that grows* '*wild*.'

> A man he was, to all the country dear,
> And paſſing rich with forty pounds a year;
> Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
> Nor e'er had chang'd, nor wiſh'd to change his place;

Unſkilful

Unſkilful he to fawn, or ſeek for power,
By doctrines faſhion'd to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
More bent to raiſe the wretched, than to riſe;
His houſe was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wand'rings, but reliev'd their pain.—
—Pleas'd with his gueſts, the good man learn'd to *glow*,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careleſs their merits or their faults to ſcan,
His pity gave *e'er charity began*.

The benevolent mind cannot but yield its hearty aſſent to this beautiful oblique reprehenſion of that avarice which makes the crimes and errors of the poor, a pretence to juſtify the indulgence of its own parſimony.

—At church with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorn'd the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevail'd with double ſway,
And fools who came to ſcoff, remain'd to pray.
The ſervice paſt, around the pious man,
With ſteady zeal the honeſt ruſticks ran;
Ev'n children follow'd with endearing wile,
And pluck'd his gown to ſhare the good man's ſmile:

His

His ready ſmile a parent's warmth expreſs'd,
Their welfare pleas'd him, and their cares diſtreſs'd;
To them his heart, his love, his grief, were given,
But all his ſerious thoughts had reſt in heaven.
As ſome tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the ſtorm;
Though round its breaſt the rolling clouds are ſpread,
Eternal ſunſhine ſettles on its head.

Poetry attains its full purpoſe, when it ſets its ſubjects ſtrongly and diſtinctly in our view. This is the caſe here: we behold the good old man attended by his venerating pariſhioners, and with a kind of dignified complacence, even permitting the familiarities of their children. The concluding ſimile has been much admired, and ſo far as immaterial objects can be illuſtrated by material, it is indeed a happy illuſtration.

As every pariſh has its Clergyman, almoſt every pariſh has its School-maſter. This

This ſecondary character is here deſcribed with great force and preciſion. The Muſe, in part of her deſcription, has deſcended to convey village ideas, in village language, but has contrived to give juſt ſo much dignity to the familiar, as prevents it from diſguſting. The point is indeed ſo nice, that to ſay the lines in italicks are not proſaick or mean, is perhaps to ſay all that can be ſaid truly. We are reconciled to them only, becauſe we know that they are the effect of choice, not of incapacity:

Beſide yon ſtraggling fence that ſkirts the way,
With bloſſom'd furze unprofitably gay,
There in his noiſy manſion, ſkill'd to rule,
The village-maſter taught his little ſchool;
A man ſevere he was, and ſtern to view,
I knew him well, and every truant knew.
Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace,
The day's diſaſters in his morning face;
Full well they laugh'd with counterfeited glee,
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
Full well the buſy whiſper circling round,
Convey'd the diſmal tidings when he frown'd;

Yet

Yet he was kind, or if ſevere in aught,
The love he bore to learning was in fault:
The village all declar'd how much he *knew*;
'Twas certain he could write and cypher too;
Lands he could meaſure, terms and tides preſage,
And e'en the ſtory ran that he could gage:
In arguing too the parſon own'd his ſkill,
For e'en though vanquiſh'd, he could argue ſtill;
While words of learned length and thund'ring ſound,
Amaz'd the gazing ruſticks rang'd around,
And ſtill they gaz'd, and ſtill the wonder grew,
That one ſmall head could carry all he knew.

The deſcription of the Village Alehouſe, contains domeſtick minutiæ, of a kind, which muſt neceſſarily have pleaſed in the original, but which the hand of a maſter alone, could have made to pleaſe in the copy. That learned and judicious Critick, Dr. Warton, in his Eſſay on the Writings and Genius of Pope, juſtly obſerves, that 'The uſe, 'the force, and the excellence of lan-'guage, conſiſts in raiſing clear, com-

'plete,

'plete, and circumſtantial images, and 'in turning readers into ſpectators.' This theory he exemplifies, by quoting two paſſages from his author, in which, he ſays, that 'every epithet paints its 'object, and paints it diſtinctly.' The ſame may be ſaid with equal juſtice of the following:

Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,
Where once the ſign-poſt caught the paſſing eye;
Low lies that houſe, where nut-brown draughts inſpir'd,
Where grey-beard mirth, and ſmiling toil retir'd;
Where village ſtateſmen talk'd with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.
Imagination fondly ſtoops to trace,
The parlour ſplendors of that feſtive place;
The white-waſh'd wall, the nicely ſanded floor,
The varniſh'd clock that click'd behind the door;
The *cheſt* contriv'd a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a *cheſt* of drawers by *day*;
The pictures plac'd for ornament and uſe,
The twelve good rules, the royal game of gooſe;

The

The hearth, except when winter chill'd the *day*,
With aſpen boughs, and flowers and fennel gay,
While broken tea cups wiſely kept for ſhow,
Rang'd o'er the chimney, glitter'd in a row.

This fine poetical inventory of the furniture, is fully equalled by the character of the gueſts, and the detail of their amuſements. The negative mode of expreſſion, '*Thither no more, &c.*' by fixing the mind on the paſt, adds a kind of pleaſing regretful pathos:

Vain tranſitory ſplendors! could not all
Reprieve the tottering manſion from its fall!
Obſcure it ſinks, nor ſhall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart;
Thither no more the peaſant ſhall repair,
To ſweet oblivion of his daily care;
No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad ſhall prevail;
No more the ſmith his duſty brow ſhall clear,
Relax his pond'rous ſtrength, and lean to hear;
The hoſt himſelf no longer ſhall be found,
Careful to ſee the mantling bliſs go round;
Nor the coy maid, half willing to be preſt,
Shall kiſs the cup to paſs it to the reſt.

This

This is not poetical fiction, but hiſtorical truth. We have here no imaginary Arcadia, but the real country; no poetical ſwains, but the men who actually drive the plough, or wield the ſcythe, the ſickle, the hammer, or the hedging bill. But though nothing is invented, ſomething is ſuppreſſed. The ruſtick's hour of relaxation is too rarely ſo innocent; it is too often contaminated with extravagance, anger, and profanity: deſcribing vice and folly, however, will not prevent their exiſting; and it is agreeable to forget for a moment, the reality of their exiſtence.

The foregoing deſcription not unnaturally introduces the following reflections:

> Yes! let the rich deride, the proud diſdain,
> Theſe ſimple bleſſings of the lowly train;
> To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
> One native charm, than all the gloſs of art;

Spontaneous

Spontaneous joys, where nature has its play,
The ſoul adopts, and owns their firſt-born ſway:
Lightly they frolick o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvy'd, unmoleſted, unconfin'd.
But the long pomp, the midnight maſquerade,
With all the *freaks* of wanton wealth *array'd*,
In theſe, e're triflers half their wiſh obtain,
The toiling pleaſure ſickens into pain;
And, ev'n while Faſhions brighteſt arts decoy,
The heart diſtruſting aſks, if this be joy?

The ſentiment here is better than the expreſſion. The Poet is probably right in his ſuppoſition, that the pleaſures of the rich are leſs genuine and lively than thoſe of the poor; but his language is far from being ſimple or perſpicuous. That intention and parade raiſe expectations which will be moſtly diſappointed; that the joys which are unanticipated, and unconſtrained, or independent of the will of others, are the beſt; were undoubtedly the axioms intended to be conveyed in theſe lines, '*Spontaneous joys, &c.*' By '*ſpontaneous joys,*' we muſt underſtand, joys which without

without previous care or proviſion ſeem to offer themſelves to our acceptance: to ſay that the ſoul readily accepts ſuch, might be proper; but to ſay that the ſoul '*adopts*' them, and at the ſame time '*owns their ſway*;' and to ſay that the '*ſway*,' is a '*firſt-born ſway*;' is to uſe thoughts and words not clear of confuſion: but when theſe joys which the '*ſoul adopts*,' and whoſe '*firſt-born ſway* '*it owns*,' are ſaid to '*frolick over the* '*mind lightly, unenvied, unmoleſted, and* '*unconfined*;' we have ſurely a chaos, both of ideas and phraſeology.* The lines have alſo an ambiguity: we know not whether it is meant, that '*the ſoul adopts ſpontaneous joys*,' in which

* To diſcover fully the nonſenſe of this paſſage, it is neceſſary to recur to the ſenſe of the words metaphorically uſed. The *joys*, from the verb *adopt*, muſt be ſuppoſed to be children, ſomething inferior, or dependent; from the ſubſtantive *ſway*, they muſt be ſuppoſed to be kings, ſomething ſuperior, or governing; and from the verb *frolick*, one conceives an idea of a ſet of miſchievous young rakes, or of a harlequin. The *ſoul adopts* the *joys*, and they *rule it*, and *frolick over it*.

'*nature has her play*;' or that '*where* '*nature has her play, the ſoul adopts* '*ſpontaneous joys*:' be the ſenſe what it may, it is ſuperfluous, and ſuperfluities always create obſcurity. There is a moſt extraordinary confuſion of ideas, in the '*long pomp*' and '*midnight maſquerade* '*array'd*' in the '*freaks of wanton* '*wealth*:' how pomp and a maſquerade could be '*array'd*' at all, is not eaſy to conceive; but certainly they could not be '*array'd*' with '*freaks*.'

The Poet now proceeds to the cauſes which produced the deſertion of his village:

> Ye friends to truth, ye ſtateſmen, who ſurvey
> The rich man's joys increaſe, the poor's decay;
> 'Tis yours to judge, how wide the limits ſtand
> Between a ſplendid and a happy land.
> Proud ſwells the tide with loads of freighted ore,
> And ſhouting folly hails them from her ſhore;
> Hoards, ev'n beyond the miſer's wiſh, abound,
> And rich men flock from all the world around.
> *Yet count our gains*: this wealth is but a name,
> That leaves our uſeful product ſtill the ſame.
> *Not ſo the loſs*: the man of wealth and pride,
> Takes up a ſpace that many poor ſupplied;
>
> Space

Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds
Space for his horſes, equipage, and hounds:
The robe that wraps his limbs in ſilken ſloth,
Has robb'd the neighb'ring fields of half their grou
His ſeat, *where ſolitary ſports are ſeen,*
Indignant ſpurns the cottage from the green;
Around the world each needful product flies,
For all the luxuries the world ſupplies.
While thus the land adorn'd for pleaſure all,
In barren ſplendor feebly waits its fall.

Goldſmith undoubtedly was ſerious the foregoing apoſtrophe, '*Ye frie*' *to truth, &c.*' but his acquaintar with the world muſt be but ſuperfici who could think that ſtateſmen in g neral merited the high character of frien of truth, or friends of the poor.

He had ſaid before,

Along the lawn where ſcatter'd hamlets roſe,
Unweildy wealth and cumb'rous pomp repo

He ſays now,

———The man of wealth and pride,
Takes up a ſpace that many poor ſupplied.

That the domain of the ancient Feu Lord, or Rural Squire, was leſs exte

ſive than that of the modern Peer, Placeman, or Nabob, may be doubted; but as many old manſions yet retain their ſurrounding parks, warrens, &c. and many new villas are erected, and adorned with ſpacious plantations; pleaſure may be juſtly ſaid to have encroached on cultivation, and the rich to have remotely abſtracted from the proviſion of the poor. But the influx of foreign wealth has been miſchievous in another point of view: the new or commercial gentry acquiring their money with eaſe, have, in verification of the proverb, '*light come, light go,*' wantonly raiſed the price of commodities: the old, or landed gentry, unwilling to deſcend from their ſtate, and unable otherwiſe to ſupport it, have been obliged to augment the ſize, and advance the rent of their farms:* the great farmer has not been

* By augmenting the ſize of farms, repairs are ſaved, and rent is in general better paid. Whether the practice is ſo injurious to the community, as has been ſuppoſed, is a point not eaſy to determine.

injured

injured by his increaſed payment, for the increaſed value of his corn and cattle has enabled him to pay it, and often to become opulent. But there has been one ſufferer; the little farmer has been annihilated, or at leaſt metamorphoſed into a labourer; and the labourer has had leſs work, the ſame wages, and more expence for neceſſaries. The Author of theſe remarks muſt confeſs, that when he has viſited ſome of our capital ſeats, their ſeemingly interminable length of lawn, broken only by a few gloomy woods, has worn, to him, an air of melancholy ſolitude and idle waſte, that was far from being agreeable. He has wiſhed to exchange his ſituation for the vale of corn-clad incloſures, the winding lane, and ſhrub-hung brow, with their group of humble cottages, and chearful inhabitants. The poſſeſſors of theſe places are themſelves ſometimes not deſtitute of ſuch feelings; the ingenious Mr. Potter, in his excellent Obſervati-

ons on the Poor laws, has recorded a memorable inſtance of it: 'The late Earl 'of Leiceſter,' ſays he, 'being compli-'mented upon the completion of his 'great deſign at Holkham, replied,' "It "is a melancholy thing to ſtand alone "in one's country. I look round; not a "houſe is to be ſeen but mine. I am the "giant of giant-caſtle, and have eat up "all my neighbours." What then muſt be the caſe, when theſe faſhionable decorations are acquired by immediate rapine, extortion, or oppreſſion; by the plunder of Hindoos, and the ſlavery of Negroes? One is ready to aſk if it be poſſible to enjoy them.*

—In their towers raz'd villages I ſee,
And tears of orphans wat'ring every tree;

* The proprietors of theſe improvements, as they are called, even if they are innocently obtained, ſeldom derive much ſatisfaction from them. The pleaſure they afford chiefly reſults from making them; when they are completed, few objects ſooner produce ſatiety:

Tir'd of the ſcenes parterres and fountains yield,
He finds at laſt he better likes a field.—Pope.

Are

Are theſe mock ruins that invade my view?
They are the entrails of the poor Gentoo;
That column's trophied baſe his bones ſupply,
That lake the tears that ſwell'd his ſable eye.

LANGHORNE.*

Goldſmith's laſt quoted paſſage, '*Ye 'friends to truth, &c.*' has been conſidered in a political view; ſome attention muſt now be given to its poetry. '*Folly hailing,*' or welcoming, the ſhips to the ſhore, is a noble perſonification. The breaks in theſe lines, '*Yet count our 'gains,*' '*Not ſo our loſs,* &c.' have rather a diſagreeable effect. In blank verſe, to continue the ſenſe from one line to another, is always more or leſs neceſſary; but in rhyme it is ſeldom advantageous. The detached, or unconnected parts of a verſe, unleſs very carefully managed, are always proſaiſms. By this couplet,

The robe that wraps his limbs in *ſilken ſloth,*
Has robb'd the neighb'ring fields of half their growth;

* See his COUNTRY JUSTICE. A Poem in which a fine poetical fancy is united with juſt ſatire.

the poet undoubtedly meant to intimate, that a conſiderable tract of land would not produce more profit than was requiſite to defray the expence of a rich man's clothing. Extravagance in dreſs, was perhaps more the foible of former ages than of the preſent; but be this as it may, the notion of a '*robe robbing fields* '*of their growth*,' is hyperbolical, aukward, and far-fetched. It might have been more tolerable in a country of mulberry-trees. A juvenile writer would doubtleſs think the phraſe of '*wrapping* '*limbs in ſilken ſloth*,' a grand ſtroke, conveying the combined ideas of finery and lazineſs. '*The ſeat ſpurning the* '*cottage from the green*,' would have been a beautiful imperſonation; but the effect of it is entirely deſtroyed by the context, '*where ſolitary ſports are ſeen:*' the '*Seat*,' conſidered in itſelf, fancy might readily convert into a '*Perſon*;' but the '*ſeat where ſolitary ſports are* '*ſeen*,' muſt inevitably be '*a place.*'

Our

Our author uſes the word '*ſports*,' till it becomes almoſt inſufferable; he moſtly means by it the ale-houſe amuſements of villagers: he here muſt mean the field-diverſions of their ſuperiors. The four lines, '*Around the world, &c.*' had better have been ſuppreſſed: the firſt two are introduced abruptly; the tranſition is not very natural or eaſy, from the great man's park, ſeat, and equipage, to the exportation of neceſſaries, and the importation of luxuries: the laſt two have little merit in themſelves, '*A land all adorned for pleaſure, in barren ſplendour feebly waiting a fall*,' is but an uncouth kind of language:

V. 289. As ſome fair female *unadorn'd* and *plain*,
Secure to pleaſe, while youth confirms her reign;
Slights every borrow'd *charm* that dreſs ſupplies,
Nor ſhares with art the triumph of her eyes:
But when thoſe *charms* are paſt, for charms are frail,
When *time advances*, and when lovers fail,
She

She then ſhines forth ſolicitous to bleſs,
In all the glaring impotence of dreſs.
Thus fares the *land*, by luxury betray'd,
In nature's ſimpleſt *charms* at firſt array'd;
But verging to decline, its ſplendors riſe,
It's viſtas ſtrike, it's palaces ſurprize;
While ſcourg'd by famine, from the ſmiling
land
The mournful peaſant leads his humble band;
And while he ſinks, without one arm to ſave,
The country blooms—a garden, and a grave.

The predilection of criticks, and indeed of readers in general, in favour of the ſimile, as an eſſential conſtituent of poetry, is ſo ſtrong, that whoever thinks lightly of it, will probably be deemed a ſort of literary heretick. That ſimilies are ſometimes employed to great advantage, muſt be readily allowed; but that they are far from being always advantageous, is certain. In the above paſſage, nature and art are contraſted in two different ſubjects. Some diſtant kind of reſemblance may be fancied, between a fine faſhionable lady, and a country

country full of palaces and gardens; but the parallel, as Goldſmith has drawn it, is exceedingly defective. Ornament in the woman, is the effect of a deliberate ſyſtematical deſign to recommend herſelf, and pleaſe others; the country is incapable of ſuch deſign; and even thoſe who adorn it, ſcarcely think of rendering it pleaſing to any but themſelves. The emigration affair is 'here 'again hammered on the ear,' by repetition; it is indeed introduced like the burden of a ſong, at every opportunity. There is however a noble picture, in '*Famine ſcourging the peaſant from the* '*land.*' Perhaps a writer has not a more difficult taſk than to know when he has ſaid enough: '*Famine ſcourges* '*the peaſant from the land;*' ſo far the thought, however ill-placed, is proper; but while he is '*ſcourg'd away,*' he is very inconſiſtently repreſented as '*leading his humble band with him.*' We have then other new and unneceſſary ideas,

ideas; he is '*ſcourged away*,' and he '*leads his band*;' and now he '*ſinks*.' We are not however to ſuppoſe, that he literally ſinks into the ocean, or into the grave, but metaphorically,* into poverty or diſtreſs: and he ſinks, '*without* '*one arm to ſave*;' which is an aukward, and almoſt ludicrous ſubſtitute for ſaying, that there is no perſon able or willing to relieve him. The '*Country* '*blooming a garden and a grave*,' is another abſurdity: had the peaſantry been deſcribed, as periſhing at home, the expreſſion would have been juſt; but the country could not be the '*grave* '*of thoſe who had left it*.'

V. 305. Where then, alas, ſhall poverty reſide,
To ſcape the preſſure of contiguous pride?
If to ſome *common's* fenceleſs limits ſtray'd,
He drives his flock to pick the ſcanty blade;

* The metaphor is an *ignis fatuus*, that leads many a poet into the bog of nonſenſe: for inſtances of this, recourſe may be had to Dr. YOUNG's Night Thoughts, and to ſome productions of the preſent day.

Thoſe

Thoſe fenceleſs fields the ſons of wealth divide,
And e'en the bare-worn *common* is deny'd.

The great fault of this Poem, is a diſregard to conſiſtency. The previous repeated hints of the emigration, had intirely ſuperſeded the above paſſage; for thoſe whom '*Famine had ſcourged from* '*the land*,' it ſurely need not have been aſked, '*in what part of it they ſhould* '*reſide*.' With ſimilar impropriety Rural Poverty, which we were led to ſuppoſe had left its native land, is now introduced as retiring to the metropolis; but is ſhewn to derive no advantage from a retreat thither. 'The *glit-* '*tering courtier*,' is there contraſted with the '*pale artiſt, who plies the ſickly* '*trade*;' and tumultuous Grandeur, and her rattling chariots, glaring torches, &c. with the diſtreſsful ſituation of a poor proſtitute, who

—Once perchance in village plenty bleſt,
Has wept at tales of innocence diſtreſt;

Her

Her modeſt looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primroſe peeps beneath the thorn:
Now loſt to all her friends, her virtue fled,
Near her betrayer's door ſhe lays her head;
And pinch'd with cold, and ſhrinking from the ſhower,
With heavy heart deplores that luckleſs hour,
When idly firſt, ambitious of the town,
She left her wheel, and robes of country brown.

This is a fine paſſage: there is beauty in the ſimile of the primroſe, and pathos in the mention of the unhappy girl laying her head at the door of her betrayer; but the latter ſeems rather enfeebled by the addition of theſe lines, '*With heavy heart, &c.*'

The Author now rather unſkilfully returns to his ſubject, by the following inquiry:

Do thine, *ſweet* Auburn, thine the loveliеſt train,
Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?
E'vn now perhaps by cold and hunger led,
At proud men's doors they aſk a *little bread.*

The

The reply to this query, introduces the emigration in full detail:

Ah no! to diſtant climes a dreary ſcene,
Where half the convex world intrudes between,
To torrid tracts, with fainting ſteps they go,
Where wild Altama murmurs to their woe:
Far different there from all that charm'd before,
The various terrors of that horrid ſhore;
Thoſe blazing ſuns that dart a downward ray,
And fiercely ſhed intolerable day;
Thoſe matted woods, where birds forget to ſing,
But ſilent bats in drowſy cluſters cling;
Thoſe poiſonous fields, with rank luxuriance *crown'd*,
Where the dark ſcorpion gathers death around;
Where at each ſtep the ſtranger fears to wake
The rattling terrors of the vengeful ſnake;
Where crouding tigers wait their hapleſs prey,
And ſavage men more murderous ſtill than they;
While oft in whirls the *mad* tornado flies,
Mingling the ravag'd landſcape with the ſkies.
Far different theſe from every former ſcene,
The cooling brook, the graſſy-veſted green,
The breezy covert of the warb'ling grove,
That only ſhelter'd theſts of harmleſs love.

This

This piece is animated, and in general correctly drawn; the candid rational critick can have little objection to it. The general effect of the paſſage is indeed weakened by the two laſt couplets, '*Far different, &c.*' which are totally ſuperfluous, and of diſſimilar character. The compound '*graſſy-veſt-ed*,' is a bad one; the adjective '*graſſy*,' conveys the whole ſenſe, conſequently the participle, '*veſted*,' is tautologous; graſs-veſted, or verdure-veſted, would have been proper.

V. 367. Good heav'n! what ſorrows gloom'd that parting day,
That call'd them from their native walks away:
When the poor exiles, every pleaſure paſt,
Hung round their *bowers*, and fondly look'd their laſt;
And took a long farewell, and wiſh'd in vain,
For ſeats like theſe beyond the weſtern main;
And ſhudd'ring ſtill to face the diſtant deep,
Return'd and wept, and ſtill return'd to weep.
The good old ſire the firſt prepar'd to go,
To new-found worlds, and wept for others *woe*;
But

But for himſelf in conſcious virtue brave,
He only wiſh'd for worlds beyond the grave.
His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,
The fond companion of his helpleſs years,
Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,
And left a lover's for a father's arms.
With *louder plaint*, the mother ſpoke her *woes*,
And bleſt the cot where *every pleaſure roſe*;
And kiſs'd her thoughtleſs babes with many a tear,
And claſpt them cloſe, in ſorrow doubly dear;
While her fond huſband ſtrove to lend relief,
In all the decent manlineſs of grief.

An injudicious arrangement is obvious here again. This paſſage ſhould have preceeded the paſſage laſt quoted, '*Ah no*, '*to diſtant climes*, *&c.*' the people ſhould have been introduced as going, before the place to which they were to go, had been deſcribed. This diſpoſition would have produced another advantage, a climax in character, from the pathetick to the ſublime. This paragraph has many beauties: the heart muſt be inſenſible indeed, which does not feel the force

of pathos, in the circumſtances of the daughter relinquiſhing her lover, in order to attend her father; and the mother claſping her thoughtleſs babes, with additional tenderneſs. The *Labor limæ*, might however have been employed to advantage; the lines in italicks might have been ſpared; and the poſitive adjective, '*ſilent*,' in the 15th line, and the comparative, '*louder*,' in the 17th, do not agree: to ſay that ſome *accents* are *louder* than others, is proper; but to ſay that any *accents* are *louder* than *ſilence*, is abſurd, becauſe *ſilence* cannot be '*loud*' at all. The idea of habitations had been conveyed under the name of '*bowers*,' the mention of them again, under the name of '*the cot where every* '*pleaſure roſe*,' was needleſs. The expreſſion, '*where every pleaſure roſe*,' is unuſual, and rather aukward.

This is ſucceeded by an apoſtrophe to Luxury, in which kingdoms inebriated by her

her potions, are not very elegantly compared to an hydropic human body. This apoſtrophe is ill placed, as it intercepts the connection between the laſt quotation, '*Good heaven, &c.*' and the following, which concludes the poem:

Ev'n now the devaſtation is begun,
And half the buſineſs of deſtruction done;
Ev'n now methinks, as pondering here I ſtand,
I ſee the rural virtues leave the land.
Down where yon anchoring veſſel ſpreads the ſail,
That idly waiting, flaps with every gale;
Downward they move, a melancholy band,
Paſs from the ſhore, and darken all the ſtrand.
Contented toil, and hoſpitable care,
And kind connubial tenderneſs are there;
And piety with wiſhes plac'd above,
And ſteady loyalty, and faithful love.
And thou ſweet Poetry, thou lovelieſt maid,
Still firſt to fly where ſenſual joys invade,
Unfit in theſe degenerate times of ſhame,
To catch the heart, and ſtrike for honeſt fame;
Dear charming nymph, neglected and deny'd,
My ſhame in crouds, my ſolitary pride!
Thou ſource of all my bliſs, and all my woe,
Thou found'ſt me poor at firſt, and keep'ſt me ſo;

Thou guide by which the nobler arts excell,
Thou nurſe of every virtue, fare thee well!
Farewell—and O where'er thy voice be tried,
On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's ſide;
Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,
Or winter wraps the polar world in ſnow;
Still let thy voice prevailing over time,
Redreſs the rigour of th'inclement clime;
Aid ſlighted truth with thy perſwaſive ſtrain,
Teach erring man to ſpurn the rage of gain;
Teach him that ſtates of native ſtrength poſſeſt,
Though very poor, may yet be very bleſt;
That trade's proud empire haſtes to ſwift decay,
As ocean ſweeps the labour'd mole away;
While ſelf-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks reſiſt the billows and the ſky.

This is a fine paſſage, but it would admit of improvement: the firſt couplet, '*Even now, &c.*' is little better than an abſurdity; the devaſtation is '*begun,*' and '*half done,*' at the ſame time. The connection with the preceeding quotation, would have been better, if thoſe two lines had been omitted, and the third line had begun thus, '*With them, &c.*' 'The *anchor'd veſſel,*' with its '*flapping ſail,*'

'*ſail*,' is a natural and beautiful image. The addreſs to Poetry has a noble enthuſiaſm, but wants correctneſs: the lines in italicks, '*Unfit in theſe degene-* '*rate, &c.*' might have been ſpared; '*Strike for honeſt fame*,' is an unmeaning phraſe, nearly allied to nonſenſe; and what affinity the circumſtance of the voice of Poetry '*prevailing over time*,' can have with the circumſtance of its '*redreſſing the rigour of a climate*,' is not obvious. I am not one of thoſe who diſcover even a caſual imitation in every reſemblance; but poſſibly the ideas of two former writers might have 're-'murmured' in our poet's 'memorial 'cell,' when he wrote theſe lines. Prefixed to Pope's works are ſeveral complimentary copies of verſes, in one of which, the author ſpeaking of the ſtory of Lodona, ſays,

The ſoft complaint ſhall over time prevail.

And Gray, in his progreſs of poetry, has the following:

In climes beyond the ſolar road,
Where ſhaggy forms o'er ice-built mountains roam,
The muſe has broke the twilight gloom
To chear the ſhivering native's dull abode.

The Deſerted village, as has been hinted, is, on the whole, a performance of great merit; it has numerous excellencies, and numerous faults; and while we are charmed with the former, we cannot but regret that more pains was not taken to avoid the latter.

ESSAY IX.

On THOMSON'S SEASONS.

GENERAL Criticiſm can ſay little of the SEASONS, that has not been ſaid already. The ingenious Mr. Aikin, in the Eſſay prefixed to his edition, has explained their plan and character; and to Dr. Johnſon's opinion of them, there is no great reaſon to object. Particular criticiſm cannot be expected to purſue her taſk regularly, through a Poem of ſuch length; but the examination of ſome detached paſſages, will perhaps ſufficiently point out the nature of its beauties and defects.

Thomſon obſerved cloſely, and deſcribed forcibly. He ſeldom diſtracts the reader's attention by the introduction of heterogenous ideas; he has few ſimilies, and few alluſions; but he errs, by endeavouring to impreſs his ſubject on the mind, with a pomp and reduplication of expreſſion. He often, in attempting energy and dignity, produces bombaſt and obſcurity; and in avoiding meanneſs, becomes guilty of affectation. His language is indeed a kind of anamoly, for which he had no example, and which it would not be eaſy to imitate.

The country wears one of its moſt beautiful appearances, when the orchards and hedges are in bloſſom; this he deſcribes as follows:

——————— I purſue my walk,
And ſee the country far-diffus'd around,
One boundleſs bluſh, one *white-impurpled ſhower*
Of mingled bloſſoms; where the raptur'd eye
Hurries

Hurries from *joy* to *joy*, and hid beneath
The fair profuſion, *yellow autumn* ſpies.

This paſſage gives a general confuſed idea of the ſubject, but they are extremely deficient in correctneſs. To term the country a '*boundleſs bluſh*,' becauſe it is covered with trees in bloom, however bold, is perhaps juſtifiable; but to term that country a '*white empurpled ſhower*,' becauſe the trees have ſhed their bloſſoms, is ſurely rather too violent. That the raptured eye hurried from place to place, might have been ſaid properly; but to ſay it hurried from '*joy*' to '*joy*,' when nothing of *joy* had been previouſly mentioned, ſeems carrying figurative language almoſt to abſurdity.* He who ſees trees in bloom, muſt naturally ſuppoſe that they will bear fruit, and his imagination may behold them fraught with it; but his *eye* may look in vain among the

* The Author meant undoubtedly, the places or proſpects that afforded *joy* or *pleaſure*.

bloſſoms,

bloſſoms,' to *ſpy* the poetical perſon *autumn*. There is beſides ſomething whimſical, if not ludicrous, in the ſuppoſed concealment and diſcovery of the imperſonated ſeaſon.

Our poet's picture of the approach and deſcent of a '*vernal ſhower*,' is one of his capital pièces. It is a fair ſpecimen of his general manner; its beauties and defects are ſo intermixed, that it is no eaſy matter to ſeparate them.

> ——————Gradual ſinks the breeze
> Into a perfect calm; that not a breath,
> Is heard to quiver through the *cloſing* woods,
> Or ruſhing hum the *many-twinkling* * leaves
> Of aſpin tall. The uncurling floods, diffus'd
> In glaſſy breath, *ſeem through deluſive lapſe*
> *Forgetful of their courſe*. Tis ſilence all,
> And pleaſing expectation. Herds and flocks
> Drop the dry ſprig, and *mute-imploring, eye*

* GRAY has been cenſured for the uſe of this compound *many-twinkling*, but his cenſurers have not remarked that Thomſon had uſed it before him.

The

The falling verdure. Huſh'd in ſhort ſuſpenſe,
The plumy people *ſtreak their wings with oil,*
To throw the *lucid moiſture* trickling off;
And wait the approaching ſign to ſtrike at once
Into the general choir. Ev'n mountains, vales,
And foreſts, *ſeem, impatient,* to demand
The *promis'd ſweetneſs.* Man ſuperior walks
Amid the glad creation, muſing praiſe,
And looking lively gratitude. At laſt,
The clouds conſign their treaſures to the fields;
And ſoftly-ſhaking on the dimpled pool,
Preluſive drops *let all their moiſture flow,*
In large effuſion o'er the freſhen'd world.

There are here two kinds of circumſtances, one actually exiſtent in nature, and one the product of the Poet's imagination. The calm is of the firſt ſort, and is forcibly expreſſed by the quieſcence of the aſpin, and the glaſſineſs of the water. The '*floods ſeeming forgetful* '*of their courſe,*' is of the ſecond, and might be an allowable hyperbole; but in the preſent caſe, it wants propriety. A poetical mind too ſeldom thinks with preciſion; imagination is apt to act without

without judgment, and confound one object with another. The floods could not ſeem '*forgetful of their courſe*,' for their *courſe* was not ſtopped. On the ceſſation of the wind, the curl or undulation on the ſurface would ceaſe, but the motion of the current would not be deſtroyed. When the gale ſunk, a pool would become ſmooth; but a river which run before, would run ſtill, and with the ſame velocity.* To ſay that the floods ſeem forgetful of their courſe, '*through deluſive lapſe*,' is to talk nonſenſe. The '*herds and the flocks dropping the dry ſprig*,' may poſſibly be a natural action; nor may it be deemed too bold to repreſent them as '*imploring the coming ſhower*;' but it is certainly too violent an anticipation to

* Thomſon ſeems to have caught his idea from a very gentle ſtream, which, in a calm, would appear totally ſmooth; but even ſuch a ſtream would have a *courſe*, or current, which it conſequently could not be properly ſaid to *forget*.

make

make them '*eye or view that ſhower as* '*falling*,' before it began to fall. It is alſo as violent a ſubſtitution of effect for cauſe, to call the rain '*verdure*;' and worſe ſtill, by the addition of a previous and totally inapplicable epithet, to term it '*falling verdure*.' Fancy ſeems indeed here to have run wild; ſhe ſuppoſes that the '*herds*' implore the rain, and at the ſame time ſee it '*falling*;' and *imagine* they *ſee* in it the *green colour*, which will, in conſequence of it, cover their future paſtures. How far the affair of the birds moiſtening their plumage with an oleaginous matter, or in our author's words, '*ſtreak*-'*ing their wings with oil*,' is a fact, I pretend not to determine. The circumſtance of the '*mountains, foreſts, &c.* '*ſeeming impatient for the rain*,' if not too poetically bold, is at leaſt miſplaced; it ſhould have immediately followed that of '*the rivers ſeeming forgetful of their* '*courſe*; the proceſs would then have been, from

from inanimate to animate matter, from water and earth, to birds, beaſts, and man; this would have been a climax. The '*preluſive drops on the dimpled pool,*' is a beautiful ſtroke; but it was unneceſſary to ſay, firſt, that '*The clouds conſign their treaſures to the fields,*'* and next, that they '*let all their moiſture flow in large effuſion o'er the freſhen'd world.*'

> The ſtealing ſhower is ſcarce to *patter* heard,
> By ſuch as wander through the foreſt walks,
> Beneath the umbrageous multitude of leaves.
> But who can hold the ſhade, when *heaven deſcends*
> In univerſal bounty, *ſhedding herbs*
> *And fruits and flowers* on nature's ample lap?
> *Swift* fancy *fir'd*, anticipates their growth;
> And while the *milky nutriment* diſtills,
> Beholds the *kindling* country *colour* round.

There is nature in the firſt three lines of the above, but an unnatural affectation

* This line, conſidered in itſelf, has great merit. The oppoſition between the *clouds* and the *fields*, and the tranſmiſſion of the rain from the former to the latter, are ideas well conceived and expreſſed.

in

in the reſt. Walking *under thick trees* in a vernal rain, which does not penetrate, is certainly very pleaſant; but walking *abroad* even in ſuch a rain, would hardly be agreeable enough to produce fine reveries on the proſpect of plenty. This paſſage alſo is verboſe and affected; '*Fancy is fir'd, the country* '*kindles, &c.*' the thought ſimply expreſſed, is this; that heaven in ſhedding the rain, ſheds herbs and flowers; &c. and that fancy anticipates their growth, and beholds the country covered with them.

Where a ſubject occupies any conſiderable number of lines, it is commonly neceſſary to mention it repeatedly, either in the ſame terms, or in others. The permitting one word to recur frequently, has been juſtly termed a ſlovenly practice; and writers, to avoid it, often have recourſe to a kind of metonymical, or rather catachreſtical expreſſions,

preſſions, which are moſtly either improper or inelegant. Thomſon has a great number of theſe quaint phraſes of his own conſtruction. The reader muſt have obſerved, that in the two immediately preceding paſſages, the ſingle circumſtance of rain, is deſcribed by no leſs than ſeven different appellations; it is called '*falling verdure*,' '*lucid moiſture*,' '*promis'd ſweetneſs*,' '*treaſures of the clouds*,' '*heaven deſcending in univerſal bounty*,' '*fruits and flowers*,' and laſtly, '*milky nutriment*.'

Thus all day long the full-diſtended clouds,
Indulge their genial ſtores and well-ſhower'd earth
Is *deep-enrich'd* with vegetable life;
Till in the weſtern ſky the *downward ſun*
Looks out effulgent from *amid the fluſh*
Of broken clouds, gay-ſhifting to his beam.
The rapid radiance inſtantaneous ſtrikes;
The illumin'd mountains through the foreſt ſtreams,
Shakes on the floods, and in a yellow miſt
Far ſmoaking o'er the interminable plain,
In twinkling myriads lights the dewy gems.

Moiſt,

Moiſt, *bright*, and *green*, the landſcape *laughs*
around;
Full ſwell the woods, *their every muſic wakes*,
Mix'd in wild concert with the warbling brooks
Increas'd, the diſtant bleatings of the hills,
The *hollow lows* reſponſive from the vales,
Whence blending all the *ſweeten'd* zephir
ſprings.

That a mind fully poſſeſſed of its ſubject, ſhould aim to expreſs it in every poſſible method, is natural; conſequently one cannot wonder at finding in poetry, ſuch frequent reiteration of the ſame ideas in different expreſſions. The writer may experience no diſguſt from this redundance, but the reader muſt; for he has conceived the thought, and wiſhes not to dwell upon it, but to quit it for another. This is generally the caſe, but not conſtantly; repetition ſometimes pleaſes. Our author had deſcanted largely on his vernal rain; but he introduces it here again, '*Thus all day long*, *&c.*' with much dignity and eaſe. This paſ-

ſage has great merit; nothing can be more natural and pictureſque, than the images of the '*ſun ſhining* from among 'the *broken clouds*, and his *radiance ſtrik-* 'ing on the *mountain*, *ſtreaming* through 'the *foreſt*, *trembling* on the *water*, 'ſmoaking in the *yellow miſt*, and *glitter-* 'ing on *the drops of rain*.' There is a confuſion, and contrariety of ideas in the circumſtance of the '*landſcape laugh-* 'ing:' the verb '*laugh*,'* rather indicates a poetical perſon; but the epithets *round*, *moiſt*, *bright*, and *green*, are only compatible with a natural object. '*Full* 'ſwell the *woods*,' is an aukward phraſe, whoſe meaning can ſcarcely be diſcovered; and '*Their every muſic wakes*,' is but little better. Thoſe who are cu-

* The human countenance, when ſmiling, is beheld with complacence; and by a catachreſis, or inverſion, a fine proſpect, which is agreeable to the eye, is ſaid to '*ſmile*;' but the word '*laugh*,' however authorized, istoo ſtrong, and muſt convey a perſonal idea.

rious

rious in ſound, will be diſguſted with the cacophony in '*hollow lows.*' The '*zephir*' may be properly ſaid to '*blend,*' or mingle, the various noiſes; but why that '*zephir*' ſhould be ſaid to '*ſpring,*' particularly '*from the vales,*' and why it ſhould be ſaid to be '*ſweet-en'd,*' are queſtions which it is natural to aſk, but poſſibly they could not be eaſily anſwered.

The amuſement of angling has been generally regarded as a diverſion, not only inoffenſive in itſelf, but alſo favourable to the meditations of the philoſophical and religious. Perhaps, however, it might be difficult to reconcile with the idea of moral rectitude, the idea of pleaſure obtained by the puniſhment of innocent beings.* The attention of

* This conſideration apart, the amuſement might be, in ſome reſpects, agreeable, and deſcriptions of it generally pleaſe; witneſs that engaging book, WALTON's Complete Angler, and Mr. MOSES BROWNE's truly poetical Piſcatory Eclogues.

an angler will alſo be too anxiouſly employed on the object he is endeavouring to procure, to admit the exerciſe of his mental powers on diſſimilar ſubjects. Of this amuſement, Thomſon has given a deſcription full of maſterly ſtrokes; a deſcription, which ſhews that he muſt either have practiſed it himſelf, or attended very cloſely on the practice of it by others.

> Now when the firſt foul torrent of the brooks,
> Swell'd with the vernal rains, is ebb'd away;
> And whitening, down their *moſſy-tinctur'd* ſtream
> Deſcends the billowy foam; now is the time,
> While yet the dark-brown water aids the guile,
> *To tempt the trout.* The well diſſembled fly,
> The rod fine-tapering with *elaſtic ſpring*,
> *Snatch'd from the hoary ſteed the floating line,*
> *And all thy ſlender watery ſtores prepare.*

The proper ſeaſon for the ſport, and the implements requiſite for it, are here detailed with a moſt ſtriking particularity, though not with the greateſt correctneſs of

of language. The compound '*moſſy-tinctur'd*,' ſeems improperly introduced; one ſhould ſuppoſe it was deſigned to convey the idea of a greeniſh colour, but we are told, that the water is '*dark-brown*.' '*To tempt the trout*,' is proſaick. The '*well-diſſembled fly*,' is ſimple and juſt; and the '*rod fine tapering with elaſtic ſpring*,' is expreſſive; but to have mentioned the '*floating line*,' would ſurely have been ſufficient, without intimating that it was made of white horſe-hair; and that in a manner ſo obſcure, '*Snatch'd from the hoary ſteed, &c.*' that, if the circumſtance was not generally known, the verſe would be unintelligible. The next line is an excreſcence; it is not eaſy to gueſs what '*other ſlender watry ſtores*,' were intended for preparation.

But let not on thy hook the tortur'd worm,
Convulſive, twiſt in agonizing folds;
Which by rapacious hunger ſwallow'd deep,
Gives as you tear it from the bleeding breaſt

Of the weak helpleſs uncomplaining wretch,
Harſh pain, and horror to the tender hand.

The man of humanity, who reads this, however fond of fiſhing he may be, will ſurely never impale a worm again. The picture is indeed drawn with ſuch force, as almoſt to ſhock imagination.

High to their fount, this day amid the hills,
And woodlands warbling round,† trace up the brooks;
The next purſue their rocky chanell'd maze
Down to the rivers, in whoſe ample wave
Their little naiads love to ſport at large.
Juſt in the dubious point, where with the pool
Is mix'd the tremb'ling ſtream, or where it boils
Around the ſtone, or from the hollow'd bank
Reverted plays in undulating *flow*,
There throw nice-judging the deluſive fly;

† '*Woodlands warbling round.*' This is an inſtance of poetical boldneſs, without impropriety: the *woods* are, without any great violence, ſubſtituted for the *birds* who inhabit them.

And

And as you lead it round in artful curve,
With eye-attentive mark the ſpringing game.

The Poet has here deſcribed the places proper for angling, with uncommon accuracy: our fancy is delighted with his '*hills and woods*,' and '*rocky channell'd* '*brooks*;' and a painter could not have given a water ſcene, with all its minute diverſities, more exactly than he has in his '*pool mixing with the ſtream*,' and his '*ſtream boiling around the ſtone*,' or '*re-* '*verted from the hollow bank*.'

Strait as above the ſurface of the flood
They wanton riſe, or urg'd by hunger leap,
Then fix, with gentle twitch, the barbed hook:
Some lightly-toſſing to the graſſy bank,
And to the ſhelving ſhore ſlow-dragging ſome,
With various hand proportion'd to their force.

The motions of the fiſh, and the operations of the angler, are here detailed with wonderful preciſion. The com-

pound epithets, '*lightly toſſing*,' '*ſlow-dragging*,' are ſtrikingly expreſſive of the actions; but ſome may think them wanting in poetical dignity.

> If yet too young, and eaſily deceiv'd,
> A worthleſs prey ſcarce bends your pliant rod,
> Him *piteous of his youth, and the ſhort ſpace*
> *He has enjoy'd the vital light of heaven*,
> Soft diſengage, and back into the ſtream
> The *ſpeckled infant* throw.*

The praiſe beſtowed on the preceding paſſage, cannot be juſtly given to this. There is in it an attempt at dignity above the occaſion. Pathos ſeems to have been intended, but affectation only is produced.

> ——————But ſhould you lure
> From his dark haunts, beneath the tangled roots
> Of pendent trees, the monarch of the brook,

* The paſſage ſtands thus in ſome of the common editions. Mr. AIKIN reads '*ſpeckled captive*.'

Behoves

Behoves you then to ply your fineſt art.
Longtime he following cautious, ſcans the fly,
And oft attempts to ſeize it; but as oft
The dimpled water ſpeaks his jealous fear.
At laſt while haply o'er the ſhaded ſun
Paſſes a cloud, he deſperate takes *the death*
With ſullen plunge. At once he darts along,
Deep-ſtruck, and runs out all the lengthen'd line;
Then ſeeks the fartheſt ooze, the ſheltering weed,
The cavern'd bank, his old ſecure abode;
And flies aloft, and flounces round the pool,
Indignant of the guile. With yielding hand
That feels him ſtill, yet to his furious courſe
Gives way, you, now retiring, following now
Acroſs the ſtream, exhauſt his idle rage:
Till floating broad upon his breathleſs ſide,
And to his fate abandon'd, to the ſhore
You *gaily* drag your unreſiſting prize.

This is a remarkable inſtance of that poetry, which can "turn readers into "ſpectators." The whole proceſs of catching a large fiſh, is deſcribed in the moſt explicit and judicious manner; but the language is in ſome few inſtances exceptionable.

Thomſon's

Thomſon's account of the different ſituations, choſen by different birds for their neſts, demonſtrates the cloſeſt obſervations of nature; but the language has his uſual inequality:

——————Some to the holly hedge
Neſtling repair, and to the thickſet ſome;
Some to the rude protection of the thorn
Commit their feeble offſpring. The cleft tree
Offers its kind concealment to a few,
Their food its inſects, and its moſs their neſts.
Others apart far in the graſſy dale,
Or *roughening waſte* their *humble texture* weave.
But moſt in woodland ſolitudes delight,
In unfrequented glooms, or ſhady banks,
Steep, and divided by a bubbling brook,
Whoſe murmurs ſooth them all the livelong day,
When by kind duty fix'd. Among the roots
Of hazel, pendent o'er the plaintive ſtream,
They frame the firſt foundation of their *domes*;
Dry ſprigs of trees in artful fabrick laid,
And bound with clay together. Now 'tis nought
But reſtleſs hurry through the buſy air,

Beat

Beat by unnumber'd wings. The ſwallow
ſweeps
The ſlimy pool, to build his hanging houſe
Intent. And often from the *careleſs* backs
Of herds and flocks, a thouſand tugging bills,
Pluck hair and wool; and oft, when unobſerv'd,
Steal from the barn a ſtraw: till ſoft and warm,
Clean, and complete, their habitation grows.

Some Criticks have ſuppoſed, that poetry can only deal in generals; or in other words, that it cannot ſubſiſt with any very minute ſpecification of particulars. To ſuch, this paſſage might be well produced as a proof, that their opinion is erroneous. That poetical power, which, in Homer, tranſports us to the banks of Simois, and ſhews us the ſhield of Achilles, or the caſque of Hector; and in Virgil, ſets before us the herdſman, 'who feebly dragg'd his goat along;' the vine-pruner ſinging at his labour upon the rocks, and even the ſmoaky rafters of a cottage; that power here conveys us to the woodland's remoteſt receſſes,

receſſes, among the ſhaggy banks, and hazel roots, projecting over the gurgling rills, where the feather'd race are building their habitations. The notation of time is always pleaſing; there is ſomething finely romantick in the idea of the birds being ſoothed with the murmurs of the brook '*all the livelong* '*day*.' The whole, however, concludes with an anticlimax: when we are told of '*ſtealing from the barn a ſtraw*,' however natural may be the action deſcribed by that expreſſion, the expreſſion itſelf is a wretched proſaiſm. '*Clean and com-* '*plete*,' alſo, is little better than 'clean 'and tight;' the diction of a houſe-maid or a char-woman.

The deſcription of Hagley Park, and its proſpects, has a remarkable mixture of beauties and faults:

O Lyttleton, the friend! *thy* paſſions thus
And meditations vary, as *at large*

Courting

Courting the Muſe, through Hagley Park *you*
ſtray
Thy Britiſh Tempé! there along the dale,
With woods o'erhung, and ſhagg'd with moſſy
rocks,
Whence on each hand the guſhing waters play,
Or down the rough caſcade white-daſhing fall,
Or gleam in lengthen'd viſta through the trees,
You ſilent *ſteal*; or ſit beneath the ſhade
Of ſolemn oaks, that tuft the ſwelling mounts,
Thrown graceful round by nature's careleſs
hand,
And penſive liſten to the various voice
Of rural peace: the herds, the flocks, the birds;
The hollow-whiſp'ring breeze, the plaint of rills,
That purling down amid the twiſted roots
That creep around, their *dewy murmurs ſhake*
On the ſooth'd ear.——

This picture, though generally deſcriptive, is not locally peculiar. Many ornamented grounds have their '*dales* '*overhung with woods*,' and '*ſhagged* '*with rocks*;' their *ſwelling mounts crown'd with oaks*, and *their waters falling in foamy caſcades*, or *ſhining* in *perſpective among the trees*. That common

mon blemiſh in poetry, a change of perſon from ſingular to plural, and *vice verſa*, is here very diſagreeably inſtanced; '*Thy paſſions—you ſtray—thy Britiſh* '*Tempe, &c.*' The language ſhould have been uniform, '*Your paſſions—you ſtray,—* '*&c.*' 'The *various voice of rural peace,*' is highly exceptionable: Peace and noiſe are contradictory ideas. *Peace* ſeems here to be perſonified, and a deficiency of judgment is ſtrikingly betrayed, in attributing to her a '*voice ſo* '*various,*' as the '*lowing of herds,*' the '*bleating of flocks,*' and the '*ſound of* '*winds and waters.*' To call the gurgling of rills a '*plaint,*' is boldly poetical; but to call it in the ſame ſentence, '*dewy murmurs,*' is a redundancy. '*Dewy murmurs,*' is a vicious expreſſion: the epithet '*dewy,*' can relate only to an object of feeling or ſight, conſequently it is abſurdly joined with '*murmurs,*' an object only of hearing.

Mean time

Mean time you gain the height from whoſe
fair brow,
The burſting proſpect ſpreads immenſe around:
And *ſnatch'd* o'er hill and dale, and wood and
lawn,
And verdant field, and dark'ning heath be-
tween,
And villages emboſom'd ſoft in trees,*
And ſpiry towns by ſurging columns mark'd
Of houſhold ſmoke, *your eye excurſive roams:*
Wide ſtretching from the hall, *in whoſe kind*
haunt
The hoſpitable Genius lingers ſtill,
To where the broken landſcape, by degrees,
Aſcending, roughens into rigid hills;
O'er which the Cambrian mountains, like far
clouds
That ſkirt the blue horizon, duſky riſe. †

* Milton firſt introduced this beautiful image:

Towers and battlements it ſees,
Boſom'd deep in tufted trees.

† The Author of theſe obſervations was once on the hill behind Hagley Park, and viewed this proſpect. Perhaps few places in our own country, afford ſuch a noble aſſemblage of natural objects; among others, the ſublime convex of the Wrekin, and the enormous rocky wall

This deſcription has great force. To a perſon who has not ſeen the view it deſcribes, it will convey a general, grand, and pleaſing idea; to one who has ſeen that view, it will inſtantly recall its particular beauties. But the language is here again incorrect. '*Snatch'd,*' is ſuperfluous and abſurd; for who would talk of '*ſnatching an eye?*'* It is alſo placed

wall of Malvern, with great part of the counties of Salop, Worceſter, and Hereford, &c. beneath them. The day was cloudy, and he could not for ſome time diſtinguiſh the Welch mountains from the clouds. He knew that ſcenes of this kind are not to be ſeen in an inſtant; and continued looking at the point he was directed to, through a good teleſcope: while all near hand remained unillumined, the ſun broke out at an immenſe diſtance; objects, before in confuſion, became diſtinct and beautiful; he ſaw the mountains in their various poſitions, ſhapes, and colours, glowing with brightneſs, and was ready to fancy them the regions of another world.

* It is a circumſtance that cannot have eſcaped notice, that moſt authors have their favourite words, which they are apt to introduce too often. There ſeems a natural

placed at ſuch a diſtance from the verb '*roams*,' with which it muſt connect, in order to ſave the period from being nonſenſe; that the reader at firſt does not perceive the connexion. The adjective '*excurſive*,' and the compound, '*wide-ſtretching*,' are alſo ſupernumeraries. The ſentence placed in its natural order, will read thus: 'Your eye '*ſnatch'd* over hill and dale, &c. *roams* '*excurſive*, *wide-ſtretching* from, &c.' Blank verſe, where ſuch violent tranſpoſitions and unneceſſary epithets are uſed, ſurely is not unjuſtly accuſed of obſcurity. The '*kind haunt*' of the

tural inclination to commit this fault, and I have perhaps ſometimes committed it myſelf, though it has diſguſted me in the works of others. I have already remarked, that GOLDSMITH, in his Deſerted Village, has uſed the ſubſtantive, '*Sports*,' and the adjective, '*ſweet*,' to an exceſs. Thomſon ſeemed to have a predilection for this word '*ſnatch'd*;' his fiſhing line is '*ſnatch'd from the* '*hoary ſteed*.' Spring, line 384, has been noticed; and in line 516, he talks of '*ſnatching a hurried eye through* '*a verdant maze*.' He once uſes it properly: *The kiſs* '*ſnatch'd haſty from the ſidelong maid*.' Winter, l. 625.

hall, is a needleſs periphraſis; it was ſufficient to ſay of the hall, that the '*hoſpitable genius*' lingered in it.

The deſcription of Hay-making demands particular attention:

V. 331. Now ſwarms the village o'er the jovial mead:
The ruſtic youth brown with meridian toil,
Healthful and ſtrong; *full* as the ſummer roſe
Blown by prevailing ſuns, the ruddy maid,
Half naked, ſwelling on the ſight, and all
Her kindled graces burning o'er her cheek.
Ev'n ſtooping age is here; and infant hands
Trail the long rake, or with the fragrant load
O'er charg'd amid the *kind oppreſſion* roll.
Wide flies the *tedded grain*; all in a row
Advancing broad, or wheeling round the field,
They ſpread the breathing harveſt to the ſun,
That throws refreſhing round a rural ſmell:
Or as they rake the green-appearing ground,
And drive the *duſky wave* along the mead,
The ruſſet haycock riſes thick behind
In order gay.———*

Thomſon

* The reader may compare with the above, DODSLEY's deſcription of the ſame ſubject, in his Poem, called

Thomſon was fond of delineating the female form, and he ſometimes delineated it to advantage; but ſurely his ruddy hay-maker is deſcribed with more pomp than preciſion. The ſimile of the *Roſe*, (of which, by the way, I do not perceive the propriety,) in the anticipatory manner in which it is introduced, renders the ſentence obſcure. '*Swelling on the ſight*,' is an expreſſion either unmeaning, or indelicate; and a

called Publick Virtue, a work of very conſiderable poetical merit.

> ——In ſlanting rows,
> With ſtill approaching ſtep and levell'd ſtroke,
> The early mower bending o'er his ſcythe,
> Lays low the ſlender graſs, emblem of man
> Falling beneath the ruthleſs hand of time.
> Then follows blithe, equipt with fork and rake,
> In light array, the train of nymphs and ſwains.
> Wide o'er the field, their labour ſeeming ſport,
> They toſs the withering herbage; light it flies,
> Borne on the wings of zephir, whoſe ſoft gale,
> Now while the aſcending ſun's bright beam exhales
> The grateful ſweetneſs of the new-mown hay,
> Breathing refreſhment, fans the toiling ſwain.

healthy countenance flushed with heat and labour, is somewhat strangely characterized by the term of '*kindled graces* '*burning o'er a cheek.*' Our author has also here a whole group of his new-coined denominations; the hay is successively called '*fragrant load, kind op-* '*pression, tedded grain, breathing harvest,* ' and *dusky wave.*' '*Kind oppression,*' is a phrase of that sort, which one scarcely knows whether to blame, or praise: it consists of two words, directly opposite in their signification; and yet, perhaps, no phrase whatever could have better conveyed the idea of an easy uninjurious weight.‡ '*Tedded grain,*' seems an unjustifiable novelty; the grain, or seed, as an important part of corn, is often used for the *whole*; but is too unimportant a *part* of grass, to be used

‡ The passage however is highly redundant, '*With the fragrant load o'ercharg'd amid the kind op-* '*pression roll.*'

for

for that in like manner: '*Tedded* '*graſs*' would have been unexceptionable. '*Duſky-wave*,' is bold, but not improper; a reſemblance is eaſily conceiveable between rows of graſs on a plain, and ridges of water on the ſurface of the ocean. There is an ambiguity in this, '*They ſpread the breath-* '*ing harveſt*, &c.' We know not whether it is meant, that the *ſun*, by its exhaling power, throws the *refreſhful ſmell*, or whether it is meant that the hay itſelf threw it; if the latter was meant, ſenſe and grammar are at variance, as *ſun* is the ſubſtantive immediately connected with the verb *throws*. The circumſtances of age unequal to harder labour, attending the comparatively lighter taſk of hay-making; of the children trailing the rake, and rolling among the ſwarths, and of the green appearing ground, and ruſſet haycock riſing behind, are all equally juſt and beautiful.

From hay-making, the poet makes an abrupt tranſition to another pleaſing rural occupation, viz. ſheep-ſhearing:

Or ruſhing thence in one *diffuſive band*,
They drive the troubled flocks, by many a *dog*
Compell'd, to where the mazy-running brook
Forms a deep pool: this bank abrupt and high,
And that fair-ſpreading in a pebbled ſhore.
Urg'd to the giddy brink, much is the toil,
The clamour much of men, and boys, and *dogs*,
E're the *ſoft fearful people*, to the flood
Commit their *woolly ſides*; and oft the ſwain
On ſome impatient ſeizing hurls them in:
Embolden'd then, nor heſitating more,
Faſt, faſt, they plunge amid the flaſhing wave,
And panting labour to the further ſhore.
Repeated this, till deep the well-waſh'd fleece
Has drunk the flood, *and from his lively haunt*
The trout is baniſh'd by the ſordid ſtream:
Heavy, and dripping, to the breezy brow
Slow move the harmleſs race; where as they ſpread
Their *ſwelling treaſures* to the ſunny ray,
Inly diſturb'd, and wond'ring what this wild
Outrageous tumult means, their loud complaints
The country fill; and *toſs'd* from rock to rock,
Inceſſant bleatings run around the hills.

At

At laſt, of ſnowy white, the gather'd flocks,
Are in the wattled pen innumerous preſs'd,
Head above head; and rang'd in luſty rows,
The ſhepherds ſit, and whet the ſounding ſhears.
The houſewife waits to roll her fleecy ſtores,
With all her gay-dreſs'd maids attending round:
One, chief in gracious dignity enthron'd,
Shines o'er the reſt, the paſtoral queen, and *rays*
Her ſmiles *ſweet beaming* on her ſhepherd king;
While the glad circle round them yield their ſouls
To feſtive mirth, and wit that knows no gall.
Mean time their joyous taſk goes on apace:
Some *mingling* ſtir the melted tar, and ſome
Deep on the new-ſhorn *vagrant's* heaving ſide,
To ſtamp their maſter's cypher ready ſtand;
Others th' unwilling weather drag along;
And glorying in his might, the ſturdy boy
Holds by the twiſted horns th'indignant ram.*

There

* Another parallel paſſage from DODSLEY's Publick Virtue, may perhaps be not unacceptable. THOMSON ſeems to have been kept in view, but not ſervilely imitated. DODSLEY has adhered moſt cloſely to fact, in marking a conſiderable interval of time between waſhing and ſhearing the ſheep:

There is a total want of *vrai-ſemblance*, in the notion of a confuſed multitude ruſhing at once from the hay-field to the ſheep-ſhearing: the expreſſion, '*diffu-five band*,' is an incongruity; '*diffu-five*,' or '*diffuſed*,' gives the idea of diſperſion; '*band*,' gives the idea of connection; diffuſive train, or diffuſive throng, would have been leſs exceptionable. There is a fine ſketch of landſcape in the waſhing-place, with one bank abrupt and high, the other

——————Now beneath the ſun,
Mellowing their fleeces for th'impending ſhears,
The *woolly people*, in full clothing *ſweat*,
When the ſmooth current of a limpid brook,
The ſhepherd ſeeks, and plunging in its waves
The frighted innocents, their whitening robes
In the clear ſtream grow pure. Emerging hence
On litter'd ſtraw, the bleating flocks recline;
Till glowing heat ſhall dry, and breathing dews
Perſpiring ſoft, again through all the fleece
Diffuſe their *oily fatneſs*. Then the ſwain
Prepares th' elaſtic ſhears, and gently down
The patient creature lays; diveſting ſoon
Its lengthen'd limbs of their encumbering load.

ſpreading

ſpreading in a pebbled ſhore. For want of a previous ſubſtantive, the participle '*urg'd*,' ſeems to ſtand looking about for ſomething to concord with, and is ready to fall into the vacuity of no meaning. The Poet, at firſt ſight, appears to have written nonſenſe, and ſaid that '*the* '*toil and clamour of the men and dogs was* '*much urged to the giddy brink.*' The paſſage may be read in this manner, '*Much is the toil and clamour of men and* '*dogs, before the ſoft fearful people com-* '*mit their woolly ſides to the flood:*' but it was probably intended thus, '*When* '*the flocks are urg'd to the giddy brink,* '*much is the toil and clamour, &c. before* '*they commit themſelves to the water.*' The mention of '*dogs*,' twice, was ſuperfluous; it might have been eaſily avoided:

> They drive the flocks to where the winding ſtream
> Forms a deep pool, this bank abrupt and high, &c.

The

The phraſes of '*ſoft fearful people,*' '*woolly ſides, &c.*' have the character of affectation, and almoſt of burleſque. The following circumſtances are ſtrictly natural, and the ſenſe is conveyed with the advantage of correſpondent ſound:

> ——————The ſwain,
> On ſome impatient ſeizing hurls them in:
> Embolden'd then, nor heſitating *more*,
> Faſt, faſt, they plunge amid the fluſhing wave,
> And panting, labour to the further ſhore.

When a writer's memory collects a number of different images, great judgment is required to decide what to retain, and what to reject. The mention of the '*muddy water baniſhing the trout* '*from his haunt,*' though perhaps matter of fact, is an extraneous affair, forcibly introduced, and interfering with the principal ſubject. We have a beautiful picture in the '*dripping flocks* '*moving to the breezy brow, and ſtand-*'*ing to dry in the ſun;*' and an equally ſtriking

ſtriking repreſentation of fact in the '*inceſſant bleatings echo'd from the hills.*' The expreſſion might indeed have been more ſimple; '*ſwelling treaſures,*' might have been changed for '*ſwelling fleeces,*' and the '*loud complaints,*' ſhould have been rejected, as being the ſame with the '*inceſſant bleatings.*' The tranſpoſition is too bold in this line, '*At laſt, of ſnowy white the gather'd flocks.*' The paſtoral queen makes a very agreeable figure; but it is ſtrange the author did not obſerve the identity of ſenſe in his verb '*rays,*' and his compound, '*ſweet beaming:*' '*ſhe rays her ſmiles ſweet beaming,*' that is, '*ſhe beams her ſmiles ſweet beaming.*' The confinement of the ſheep in the pens; the ſhepherds wetting their ſhears; the heaving of the ſheep's ſide under the operation of marking, and the boy holding the ram by the horns, are all fine minutiæ.*

The

* Our late celebrated landſcape painter, George Smith, of Chicheſter, painted a piece called the Hay-Makers, another

The line, '*ſome mingling ſtir, &c.*' is proſaic. The phraſe, '*new-ſhorn vagrant,*' is quaint; there is nothing relative to the ſubject that can require, or even juſtify the word vagrant, and occurring on ſuch an occaſion as that of branding ſheep, it becomes ludicrous, as recalling the idea of burning a malefactor in the hand.

That Thomſon, in deſcribing familiar ſubjects, too often produced bombaſt on one hand, or meanneſs on the other, has been ſufficiently ſhewn. The preceding quotations, with all their merit,

another called the Hop-Pickers, and another called the Apple-Gatherers, but I do not recollect that he painted a Sheep-Shearing: THOMSON's deſcription would have afforded him many fine hints. It is ſomewhat remarkable, that THOMSON has not deſcribed Hop-Picking, or Apple-Gathering, though both might have been introduced with propriety in his Autumn. PHILIPS, in his Cyder, has omitted Apple-Gathering, though ſo important a part of his ſubject. The author of theſe Eſſays has given a ſhort occaſional ſketch of it in one of his Eclogues. See his Poetical Works, p. 115.

cannot

cannot any of them be ſaid to be thoroughly correct. Sometimes however he deſcribed, with equal preciſion, ſimplicity, and dignity. Among other inſtances of this kind may be ranked, his deſcription of ſwimming:

——————The ſprightly youth
Speeds to the well known pool, whoſe chryſtal depth
A ſandy bottom ſhows. Awhile he ſtands
Gazing the inverted landſcape, half afraid
To meditate the blue profound below;
Then plunges headlong down the circling flood.
His ebon treſſes, and his roſy cheek,
Inſtant emerge; and through th' obedient wave,
At each ſhort breathing by his lip repell'd,
With arms and legs, according well he makes,
As humour leads, an eaſy-winding path;
While from his poliſh'd ſides a dewy light
Effuſes on the pleas'd ſpectators round.

The nut-gathering ſcene in the Autumn, has equal exactneſs. Engliſh poetry can boaſt few paſſages of ſuperior beauty:

Ye

Ye ſwains now haſten to the hazel bank,
Where down the dale the wildly-winding brook
Falls hoarſe from ſteep to ſteep. In cloſe array,
Fit for the thickets and the tangling ſhrub,
Ye virgins come. For you their lateſt ſong
The woodlands raiſe; the cluſtering nuts for you
The lover finds amid the ſecret ſhade;
And where they burniſh on the topmoſt bough,
With active vigour cruſhes down the tree;
Or ſhakes them ripe from the reſigning huſk,
A gloſſy ſhower, and of an ardent brown,
As are the ringlets of Melinda's hair.*

When Thomſon quits his rural ſcenes for politer ſubjects, his compoſition has the ſame variety of character. The Poet's enumeration of female accompliſhments, is one of thoſe paſſages which will pleaſe in ſpite of great incorrectneſs. Perhaps no man but himſelf could have written ſuch a piece of beautiful and mellifluous abſurdity:

* The deſcription of the red-breaſt ſeeking ſhelter in a cottage, is another inſtance; it has the cloſeſt adherence to nature, but the language, though correct, is a lower ſtrain.

—In

—In them 'tis graceful to diſſolve at woe;
With every motion, every word, to wave
Quick o'er the *kindling cheek* the *ready* bluſh;
And from the ſmalleſt violence to ſhrink
Unequal, then the lovelieſt in their fears;
And by this ſilent adulation, ſoft,
To their protection more engaging man.

The tenderneſs which ſympathizes with diſtreſs, the delicacy which bluſhes at impropriety, and the timidity which is alarmed at violence, are here moſt properly introduced; but they would have appeared to more advantage, if ſome of the lines, in which they are deſcribed, had been more conciſe and ſimple:

——————May their tender limbs
Float in the *looſe ſimplicity* of dreſs!
And, *faſhion'd all to harmony*, alone
Know they to *ſeize the captivated ſoul*
In rapture, warbling from love-breathing lips
To teach the lute to languiſh; *with ſmooth ſtep*
Diſcloſing motion in its every charm,
To ſwim along, and *ſwell* the mazy dance;
To train the foliage o'er the ſnowy lawn;
To guide the pencil, turn the tuneful page,

To lend new flavour to the fruitful year,
And heighten nature's dainties; in their race
To rear their graces into ſecond life,
To give ſociety its higheſt taſte.

Dreſs, elegant and plain, is ſo becoming, that every lover of the Fair muſt wiſh to recommend it; but few would think of recommending it, by talking of '*limbs floating in a looſe ſimplicity.*' The knowledge of muſick is a moſt engaging qualification, but the practiſers of it are not the moſt perſpicuouſly characterized, by ſaying, that they are, or ſhould be, '*faſhioned all to harmony.*' They might have been very properly wiſhed to '*ſeize or captivate the ſoul with melo-*' *dy, warbled from love-breathing lips*;' but they are here wiſhed, to '*ſeize*' it at the ſame time that it is '*captivated,*' and to '*ſeize*' it '*in rapture.*'* Teach-

* Rapture is here ſubſtituted for vocal muſick; the thing *cauſed*, for the thing *cauſing*. The poet however ſhould have ſaid '*with rapture,*' not '*in rapture.*'

ing

'ing *the lute to languiſh,*' is a fine poetical alternative for cauſing it to produce a languiſhing ſound. Dancing may, without breach of propriety, be ſaid to '*diſcloſe motion in its every charm,*' for motion is agreeable, and conſequentlymay be ſaid to have charms; but to '*ſwim* '*along with ſmooth ſtep,*' is tautology; and how a '*dance,*' eſpecially a '*mazy* '*dance,*' could be '*ſwelled,*' is not eaſy to explain. We can only gueſs what the author meant, by '*lending new fla-* '*vour to the fruitful year;*'* but ſurely his diction is above his ſubject, if he meant the making of ſweetmeats, conſerves, and pickles.‡ The context is

* The year is put for the fruit it produces. The ancients were fond of this metonymical expreſſion; even the correct VIRGIL, (Eclog. I.) talks of *ariſtas,* beards, or ears of corn, for years. This manner might ſuit the genius of thoſe times, but it is ſeldom uſed by modern writers to advantage.

‡ The operation is here heterogeneous to the ſubject, in order to *lend flavour* to the year, the year muſt be ſuppoſed capable of being eaten.

ſtill more enigmatical, and equally tumid; a mother who, inſtead of being adviſed to nurſe and educate her children herſelf, ſhould be adviſed to '*rear her gra-* '*ces into ſecond life,*' would ſcarcely comprehend the adviſer's intentions.

When our author's ſubject required a lofty ſtrain: when he was relating circumſtances of diſtreſs, or deſcribing the grand phœnomena of nature; we find fewer of his quaint new-coined phraſes, and ill-conſtructed compounds; but he has other unſucceſsful efforts to elevate his diction; he is often turgid, often obſcure, and often redundant.

The ſtory of Celadon and Amelia has great merit; but might have been told with more conciſeneſs, more ſimplicity, and equal pathos:

> ——————Young Celadon
> And his Amelia were a matchleſs pair;
> With equal virtue form'd, and equal grace,
> The ſame, diſtinguiſh'd by their ſex alone:
> Her's

Her's the mild luſtre of the blooming morn,
And his the radiance of the riſen day.

This is a beautiful paſſage: there is perhaps no finer inſtance of attributive alluſion in our language. The difference between maſculine and feminine beauty, is ſtrikingly illuſtrated by the difference between the ardour of the day, and the mildneſs of the morning.

They lov'd. But ſuch their *guiltleſs* paſſion was,
As in the dawn of time inform'd the *heart*
Of innocence, and undiſſembling truth.

Figurative and circumlocutary expreſſions have rendered theſe lines an enigma, for which many readers have probably ſtood in need of an interpreter.* The meaning in plain Engliſh is this; *That the paſſion of Geladon and Amelia*

* There is a perverſe tendency in men to admire what they do not underſtand. Not only hearers, but readers, are often beſt pleaſed with nonſenſe. This paſſage has undoubtedly been thought very fine by many who knew not its meaning.

was guiltleſs as the paſſion of lovers in the dawn, that is to ſay, *in the earlieſt period of time*.* When however this paſſion had been ſaid *poſitively* to be guiltleſs, it was ſomewhat ſuperfluous to ſay *comparatively*, that it was *guiltleſs* as that which informed the heart of the poetical perſon *innocence*; and it muſt be ſtill greater tautology to ſay that it was *guiltleſs*, as that which informed the heart of another fictitious perſonage, *undiſſembling truth*. If it was *without guile*, it muſt be *innocent*; and if it was *innocent*, it muſt be *undiſſembling*; and if it was *undiſſembling*, it muſt be *true*.

——'Twas friendſhip heighten'd by the mutual wiſh,
The enchanting hope, and ſympathetic glow,
Beam'd from the mutual eye. *Devoting all*
To love, each was to each a dearer ſelf;

* What the Poet meant by this indeterminate expreſſion, '*dawn of time*,' is not eaſy to tell: was it the paradiſaical ſtate of innocence, or the fabulous golden age?

Supremely

Supremely happy in the awaken'd power
Of giving joy. Alone, amid the ſhades,
Still in harmonious intercourſe they liv'd
The rural day, and talk'd the flowing heart,
Or ſigh'd and look'd unutterable things.

Had the lines, '*Devoting all, &c.*' been omitted, perhaps ſome advantage would have been derived from the omiſſion. '*To talk the flowing heart,*' for '*talk-*' *ing the ſentiments flowing from the* '*heart,*' is a bold ellipſis, but it will not incur the cenſure of the candid critick; and that forcible expreſſion, '*Or ſigh'd* '*and look'd, &c.*' muſt enſure his praiſe.

So paſs'd their life, *a clear united ſtream,*
By care unruffled; till in evil hour
The tempeſt caught them on the tender walk,
Heedleſs how far, and where its mazes ſtray'd,
While, with each other bleſt, creative love
Still bade *eternal* Eden ſmile around.

Conſidering how amply the felicity of the lovers had been before inſiſted on, the mention that their life was '*unruffled* '*by care,*' is rather an anticlimax. This

ſame circumſtance ſeems alſo again unneceſſarily adverted to here; '*While with* '*each other bleſt, &c.*' Some may indeed think this reiterated idea of pleaſure beautiful, as an immediate contraſt to the ſubſequent diſtreſs, but with me the matter is doubtful. Criticiſm deſcends to her loweſt taſk, when ſhe objects to ſingle words; but that taſk is often uſeful. The phraſe, '*united ſtreams,*' would have been proper language, but the propriety of a '*an united ſtream,*' is ſomewhat diſputable. It was ſurely alſo a glaring overſight, to call a momentary ſcene of delight an '*eternal*' Eden.

> Heavy with inſtant fate her boſom heav'd
> Unwonted ſighs, and ſtealing oft a look
> Of the big gloom, on Celadon her eye
> Fell tearful, wetting her diſorder'd cheek.
> In vain aſſuring love, and confidence
> In heav'n, repreſs'd her fear; it grew and ſhook
> Her frame *near diſſolution.*——

The progreſs of fear is here ſtrikingly painted. Amelia's watching the approach of the ſtorm, firſt weeping, and

then trembling, are a fine gradation of natural circumſtances. The words '*near* '*diſſolution*,' are, however, ſuperfluous; if they mean that the terror alone had nearly deſtroyed her frame, they are too hyperbolical; if they mean ſimply, that her death was near, they are improper, as anticipating the cataſtrophe.

> ——————He perceiv'd
> Th' unequal conflict, and as angels look
> On dying ſaints, his eyes compaſſion ſhed,
> With love illumin'd high. 'Fear not, he ſaid,'
> Sweet innocence! *thou ſtranger to offence,*
> *And inward ſtorm!* He who yon ſkies involves
> In frowns of darkneſs, ever ſmiles on thee
> With kind regard. O'er thee *the ſecret ſhaft*
> *That waſtes at midnight, or the undreaded hour*
> *Of noon, flies harmleſs: and that very voice*
> Which thunders terror through the guilty heart,
> With tongues of ſeraphs whiſpers peace to thine.
> 'Tis ſafety to be near thee, ſure, and thus
> To claſp perfection.———

The narrative manner in poetry ſucceeds more frequently than the dramatick; we can deſcribe action that we ourſelves have ſeen, better than we can ſuppoſe

what another would think or ſay on this or that occaſion. The preſent paſſage is an inſtance in point. Celadon's behaviour is finely painted: the ſimile of angels looking on a dying ſaint, is in particular beautiful and appropriate; but his ſpeech is unnaturally tedious and full of puerile confuſion. The lightning which was, or ſhould have been the immediate and ſole object of notice, could not be, with any propriety, termed a '*ſecret*' ſhaft; nor is there any meaning in talking of its '*waſting at midnight*, '*or the undreaded hour of noon.*'* How the very voice which '*thundered terror*,' could at the ſame time '*whiſper peace*,' and '*whiſper it with tongues of ſeraphs*,' is not eaſy to comprehend. Should it be ſaid in vindication of the Poet, that the voice was not meant to be repreſented as

* The Poet ſeems here to have improperly transferred the ſcriptural deſcription of the peſtilence, to his lightning. If he meant to introduce the peſtilence, he wanted judgment; for the idea is evidently miſplaced.

actually

actually of ſuch inconſiſtent characters, but only ſuppoſed to produce different effects on different objects; ſtill there will remain an abſurdity, for it really had no pleaſing effect on the mind of Amelia, but the direct contrary. Something ſimple, like the following, verſified, would ſurely have been preferable. '*To thee the thunder's voice need give no terror, and the lightning's ſhaft muſt paſs over thee harmleſs.*'

——From his void embrace
(Myſterious heav'n!) that moment to the ground,
A blacken'd corſe, was ſtruck the beauteous maid.
But who can paint the lover, as he ſtood
Pierc'd by ſevere amazement, *hating life*,
Speechleſs, and fix'd in all the death of woe!
So, faint reſemblance! on the marble tomb
The well-diſſembled mourner ſtooping ſtands,
For ever ſilent, and for ever ſad.

The powers of the pencil and the pen muſt be unequal to the taſk of deſcribing the appearance of a perſon in Celadon's

don's ſituation. Perhaps our Poet has done all that could be done on the occaſion: '*Pierc'd by ſevere amazement,*' is language bold almoſt to turgidity: to ſpeak of the lover's '*hating life,*' is ſpeaking of an intellectual operation, incompatible with the ſuddenneſs of the circumſtance. It ſeems indeed ſufficient to have ſaid, that '*he ſtood ſpeechleſs,*' and '*without motion,*' as in a kind of temporary death,

Speechleſs, and fix'd in all the depth of woe!

The deſcription does not appear to be much enforced by the ſimile, but the ſimile being in itſelf an agreeable image, one does not wiſh to loſe it.

Our author's deſcription of the ſun-ſetting is another remarkable inſtance of his peculiar manner:

Low *walks* the ſun, and broadens by degrees,
Juſt o'er the verge of day. The ſhifting clouds
Aſſembled gay, a richly gorgeous train,
In all their pomp attend his ſetting throne.

Air,

Air, earth, and ocean, *ſmile immenſe.* And now
As if his weary chariot ſought the bowers
Of Amphitrite, and her tending nymphs,
(So Grecian fable ſung) he dips his orb;
Now half immers'd, and now a golden curve
Gives one bright glance, then total diſappears.

This paſſage is truly poetical, but very incorrect. The painting is ſtrong, but careleſs; it is a group of beautiful, but inconſiſtent imagery. The '*ſun's walk-*' *ing,*' is an act that infers the ſuppoſition of an imaginary perſon; its '*broad-*' *ening,*' is an act that can relate only to the real viſible globe of fire: the mention of the '*ſetting throne,*' again indicates a proſopopoeia, and the '*dipping*' of '*the orb,*' again implies a reference to the natural object. This would have been a moſt maſterly piece of compoſition, if the verb '*walk*' had been exchanged for ſome other not incongruous to the verb '*broaden*;' if the '*ſetting* '*throne,*' the unmeaning phraſe, '*juſt* '*o'er the verge of day,*' and the bombaſtick

tick '*immenſe ſmile of air, &c.*' had been all omitted; the gradual deſcent and enlargement of the ſun, its immerſion within the horizon, reduction to a curve and total diſappearance, (all fine natural and pictureſque circumſtances) been regularly connected; and the romantick idea of '*Phœbus's*' chariot ſeeking the bowers of Amphitrite, been kept intirely diſtinct, and introduced laſt as an illuſtrative illuſion.

The ingenious Mr. *Moſes Browne*,‡ in his Sunday Thoughts, has a fine de-

‡ This eminent Poet is now living, in a very advanced age. His Sunday Thoughts above-mentioned, and his Piſcatory Eclogues, have great merit, but are little noticed. With regard to the firſt, the religious nature of the ſubject, and its being written in blank verſe, are ſufficient obſtacles to its popularity; and with regard to the latter, againſt every thing that bears the name of *paſtoral* or *eclogue*, there is an irrational and ridiculous prepoſſeſſion. It muſt indeed excite the indignation of a ſenſible man, to find the works of DYER, SHENSTONE, AKENSIDE, that excellent Poem Leonidas, and ſome other modern productions of great merit, ſcarce ever ſpoken of, while flimſy and even nonſenſical performances of the preſent day are applauded.

ſcriptive

ſcriptive paſſage on the ſame ſubject of ſun-ſet:

See where at length the *downward-bending* ſun,
His low broad orb of *ſetting ſplendors* reſts
On the green *pillow* of yon weſtern ſteep,
In *ſmiling* radiance, bidding half the world
Farewell, on ſpeed to viſit nether ſkies,
Carrying morn, noon, and night in ceaſeleſs change;
Each new ſwift minute round the peopled *ball.*
Look how the *rapid journeyer ſeems to bait*
His ſlackening ſteeds, and loos'd to evening ſports,
Shoots down obliquely his diverging *beams,*
That kindle on oppoſing hills the blaze
Of glittering turrets, and illumin'd domes,
A proſpect all on fire: till ſinking ſtill
More and more ſinking; while to ſight quite loſt,
His rays play upward in the fleecy clouds,
That ſwiftly pencill'd dreſs a mimic ſcene
In fancy's eye; of groves and whiten'd alps,
And tow'rs romantick, rear'd complete, or waſte
In ruin'd majeſty; with interſpace
Of golden ether or Elyſian plain.
Then vaniſh quite as ſoon, and ſhift by turns,
To tinctures of a thouſand thouſand dyes.†

† GAY's Poem, called Rural Sports, has a deſcription of the ſun-ſetting in the ſea, in which there are ſome fine natural images.

Far

Thomſon's paſſage and this have ſimilar beauties and ſimilar defects. This has many noble images, and an uncommon melody of verſification, with much inaccuracy. The '*Sun's broad orb reſting* '*on the green ſteep,*' is a fine picture as a real object; his ſmilingly bidding the world farewell, is equally fine as a perſonification; but theſe pictures, by vicinity of ſituation, deſtroy the effect of each other. There is great poetical grandeur in the thought of the ſun carrying day with him around the globe. Thomſon's ſun is ſunk and loſt in the ocean, and we think no more of him. Browne's purſues his courſe, and our fancy follows him to Mexico or Peru, and acroſs the vaſt pacifick to China and India, till he re-appears in our

> Far in the deep the ſun his *glory* hides,
> A ſtreak of gold the ſea and ſky divides;
> The purple clouds their amber *linings* ſhow,
> And edg'd with flame rolls every wave below.

own

own horizon. The word '*ball*,'‡ is always a bad ſubſtitution for orb or ſphere. The mention of '*rapid journeyer*,' and '*ſlackening ſteeds*,' forces the idea Phœbus and his chariot on the mind; and the mention of '*diverging beams*,' inſtantly effaces it. The mountains, turrets, and domes glowing with the ſun's radiance, are moſt forcibly deſcribed in that ſimple expreſſion, '*a proſpect all on fire*.' The romantick appearance of the

‡ A fine line in one of POPE's beſt pieces is almoſt ſpoiled by the uſe of this colloquial puerile appellation;

But if eternal juſtice rules the *ball*.

Dr. YOUNG was very fond of this word *ball*. In his Poem on the Laſt Day, he has ſeveral couplets that rhyme upon it, particularly one very curious one.—The laſt trumpet, he ſays

Shall pour a dreadful note, the piercing call,
Shall *rattle* in the centre of the *ball*.

Addiſon was ridiculed for his tranſlation of the *Integer Vitæ* of Horace, where he repreſents the hero of the Ode as ſtanding unconcerned to hear the '*mighty crack*,' but YOUNG's language here is far worſe, it conveys the idea of peas in a bladder.

evening

evening clouds, which like that of other inacceſſible proſpects, often induces the imagination to form fictitious regions of ſuperlative beauty and happineſs, is exquiſitely painted by the '*whiten'd alps*, '*the towers reared complete, or waſte*,' and the

'Golden ether and Elyſian plain.'

The diction in ſome parts of this beautiful paſſage is vicious, particularly where the '*clouds*' are ſaid '*to dreſs a mimick* '*ſcene in fancy's eye.*'

Nature is rich in a variety of minute, but ſtriking circumſtances, ſome of which engage the attention of one obſerver, and ſome that of another. Thomſon and Browne have both deſcribed the ſun in the act of ſetting. Browne has repreſented the pictureſque effects of its radiance on the clouds of the weſtern horizon, and Thomſon has remarked the gradual extinction of that radiance, till nothing remains but one uniform colourleſs, and at length dark atmoſphere:

'*Confeſs'd*

Confeſs'd from yonder ſlow-extinguiſh'd clouds,
All ether ſoftening, ſober evening takes
Her wonted ſtation in the middle air;
A thouſand ſhadows at her beck, firſt this
She ſends on earth; then that of deeper dye
Steals ſoft behind; and then a deeper ſtill,
In circle following circle, gathers round,
To *cloſe* the *face* of things.

This paſſage blends natural deſcription and perſonification in a very intricate manner. Both would have been proper, and indeed beautiful, had they been kept aſunder. The gradual vaniſhing or extinction of colour in the clouds, juſtly diſcriminates evening, conſidered as a point of time; but as ſuch vaniſhing or extinction occaſions darkneſs, it could not poſſibly render evening viſible or perceptible, conſidered as a perſon.† The proſopopoeia, however, is in itſelf juſt and noble; Evening ſtands a con-

† Had the Poet been deſcribing morning, he would have had the advantage of combining reality and fiction; the withdrawing or removal of the clouds or ſhadows, might have revealed to view the fictitious perſon.

ſpicuous figure in air; '*Confeſs'd,*' in this place, is but a puerile alternative for *known*, or *diſtinguiſhed*, and '*All* '*ether ſoftening,*' is a phraſe whoſe meaning can be only gueſſed at.

Thomſon, in the above inſtance, has given, as it were, a real exiſtence to his imperſonated object, by the attribution of action, and her '*calling the ſhadows.*' He has on another occaſion thus realized a perſonification, by ſpecifying the effects it produced on human beings.

> He comes! he comes! in *every breeze* the power
> Of philoſophick melancholy comes!
> His near approach the ſudden ſtarting tear
> The glowing cheek, the mild dejected air,
> The ſoftened feature, *and the beating heart,*
> *Pierc'd deep with many a virtuous pang decline.*

This fine picture is greatly injured by a few words. The power ſhould have been ſaid to come, '*upon the breeze,*' not on '*every breeze;*' an expreſſion which indicates a multiplicity of approaches; if he came on '*every*' breeze, he

he muſt have been always coming. The glowing cheek, dejected air, and ſoftened feature, were all viſible; conſequently might *declare*, or denote his coming, but the '*beating heart*' could not *be ſeen*, conſequently could not *declare* it.

The proſopopoeia is a figure leſs liable to abuſe than the metaphor, but it is very frequently abuſed. Our author, as the late Lord Kaims † has juſtly obſerved, employs it ſometimes with impropriety or affectation. The following is a ſtriking inſtance of the finical, or puerile. Little maſter *coolneſs* '*loſt*' among his *bluſh* of *roſes*, '*dropping his* '*dews*,' and *muſing* on the *turf*, or *by the rill*, is a very curious figure:

Half in a *bluſh* of cluſtering roſes loſt
Dew-dropping coolneſs to the ſhade retires;
There on the verdant turf or flowery bed,
By gelid founts or careleſs rills to muſe. ‡

† *Elements* of Criticiſm.

‡ Weak minds and young minds are pleaſed with this fantaſtical manner. The Author of theſe Eſſays, when a boy, thought the above paſſage of Thomſon a very fine one.

Thomſon's deſcription of the Nile, diſcovers a rich poetical imagination, but it is defective in correctneſs. We find in it that common fault of an incongruous mixture of natural imagery and imperſonation. The river is traced from its ſource, till its arrival in Egypt, and its progreſs and increaſe are illuſtrated by a kind of metaphor, or indirect ſimile, drawn from ſeveral ſtages of human life, infancy, manhood, and age:

——————With annual pomp,†
Rich *king* of floods! o'erflows the ſwelling Nile.
From his two ſprings in Gojam's ſunny realm,
Pure-*welling* out, he through the lucid lake
Of fair Dambea rolls his infant *ſtream*.
There by the Naiads nurs'd he *ſports* away
His *playful youth*, amid the fragrant iſles,
That with unfading verdure ſmile around.*

† This kind of poetry has no ſoul; it is cold and artificial; the product not of the heart, but of the head. POPE, in his Treatiſe on the Bathos, well compares it to a tortoiſe, a heavy lump, under a fine embroidered ſhell.

* *Murdach*, our Poet's Biographer, ſeems miſtaken in his ſuppoſition that this paſſage is borrowed from Pliny the Elder. Our Author is indiſputably indebted for his Deſcription of the Nile to *Kercher*.

Ambitious,

Ambitious, thence the manly river breaks;
And gathering many a flood, and copious fed
With all the *mellow'd treaſures* of the ſky,
Winds in *progreſſive* majeſty along:
Through ſplendid kingdoms now devolves his maze;
Now wanders wild o'er ſolitary tracts
Of life-deſerted ſand; till glad to quit
The joyleſs deſart, down the Nubian rocks,
From thund'ring ſteep to ſteep he pours his urn,
Till Egypt joys beneath the ſpreading wave.

Fine verſification is a powerful recommendation. The critick's charity is too often induced by it to ſpare a multitude of poetical ſins. Fine verſification we indeed have here, but we have alſo a ſtrange confuſion of ideas. Nilus, as river-god, ſeems firſt indicated; he is the '*king of floods, &c.*' Proteus like, he immediately turns to real element; he '*o'erflows,*' and '*wells out,*' and becomes a '*ſtream.*' He as ſuddenly reſumes his perſonal character, and '*ſports* '*a playful youth.*' Nile, the current of water, then ſuddenly appears with pro-

perties attributable only to that current, as '*winding through kingdoms*,' &c. Nilus, the deity, is then again as abruptly introduced, '*pouring his urn*' from one thundering ſteep to another. Our author has few examples of what is termed the *clinquant*, or *concetti*, but he has deſcended to it in the circumſtances of the '*Naiads nurſing the river*,'‡ and of that river being '*glad to quit the deſart*.' Here is another ſpecimen of his affected appellation, in '*mellowed treaſures of the ſky*.' To mention that the Nile was increaſed both by the deſcent of rain, '*treaſures of the ſky*,' and the influx of rivers '*gathering many a flood*,' will appear unneceſſary, when it is conſidered that the former muſt of courſe be

‡ What the author meant by *Naiads* here, is difficult to determine. If he meant *fiſh*, a ſchool-boy could ſcarcely have been abſurd enough to talk of '*fiſh nurſing a river*;' if he meant Pagan deities, he has almoſt as abſurdly introduced the mythology of Greece in Egypt. In his deſcription of angling, he ſeems to apply the term *Naiads* to fiſh.

conveyed

conveyed by the latter. To atone for theſe faults, there is in the laſt line a moſt noble inſtance of a natural object, affording with great propriety a fine perſonification: Egypt, the tract of land, is covered with a beautiful body of water; Egypt the poetical perſon, '*rejoices be-*' *neath the ſpreading wave.*'

This paſſage might be eaſily reduced nearer to the ſtandard of claſſical ſimplicity, by dropping the imperſonations, and retaining only the metaphorical epithets. Thoſe criticks, however, with whom bombaſt and ſtrength are ſynonymous, will doubtleſs think the poetical *features* of the paſſage much *weakened* by ſuch an alteration as the following:

From its two ſprings in Gojam's ſunny realm,
The infant ſtream firſt ſeeks the lucid lake
Of fair Dambea; then in playful youth
Sports through green iſles and ever-blooming groves:

Ambitious, thence the manly river breaks,
And in its courſe by many a flood increas'd,
Winds in progreſſive majeſty along
Through ſplendid realms, and ſolitary tracts
Of life-deſerted ſand; down Nubian rocks
From thundering ſteep to ſteep impetuous pours;
And Egypt joys beneath the ſpreading wave.

Thomſon's deſcription of the South American rivers muſt not be omitted:

——————The branching Oronoque
Rolls a brown deluge, and the native drives
To dwell aloft, on life-ſufficing trees
At once his dome, his robe, his food, and arms.
Swell'd by a thouſand ſtreams, impetuous hurl'd
From all the roaring Andes, huge deſcends
The mighty Orellana. *Scarce the muſe*
Dares ſtretch her wing o'er this enormous maſs
Of ruſhing water: *ſcarce ſhe dares attempt*
The ſea-like Plata; to whoſe dread expanſe,
Continuous depth, and wonderous length of courſe,
Our floods are rills. With unabated force
In ſilent dignity they ſweep along,
And traverſe realms unknown, and blooming wilds,
And fruitful deſarts, worlds of ſolitude,
Where the ſun ſmiles, and ſeaſons teem in vain,
Unſeen

Unſeen and unenjoyed.† Forſaking theſe,
O'er peopled plains they fair diffuſive flow,
And many a nation feed, and circle ſafe,
In their fair boſom many a happy iſle;
The ſeat of *blameleſs Pan*, yet undiſturb'd
By Chriſtian crimes and Europe's cruel ſons.
Thus pouring on, they proudly ſeek the deep,
Whoſe vanquiſh'd tide recoiling from the ſhock,
Yields to this liquid weight of half the globe,
And ocean trembles for his green domain.

Poets not unfrequently aim at aggrandizing their ſubject, by avowing their inability to deſcribe it. This is a puerile and inadequate expedient. The powers of a writer can be no ſtandard

† This is a beautiful romantic thought. Dyer has one nearly ſimilar:—

——————In their rough bewilder'd vales
The blooming roſe its fragrance breathes in vain,
And ſilver fountains fall, and nightingales
Attune their notes where none are left to hear.

This is from that nobleſt of didactick poems, the *Fleece*, to which our celebrated biographical critick has done ſuch manifeſt injuſtice. It would be no difficult taſk to vindicate it againſt his objections.

for

for the judgment of a reader. Thomſon has here, perhaps inadvertently, deſcended to this feeble art of exaggeration. To ſay that his '*Muſe ſcarce dared to ſtretch* '*her wing over one river*,' or to '*at-* '*tempt*' another, does not aſſiſt us in forming an idea of either. Very different is the caſe, when theſe rivers are placed in compariſon with ours, and we are told, that to the former the latter are no more than '*rills*.'

The human mind delights to expatiate in unknown regions. It has ſomewhere been obſerved, that the accounts of travellers, even if ill written, are generally ſought and peruſed with avidity; when ſuch accounts therefore are recommended by a dignified and muſical expreſſion, it is no wonder that their charms are irreſiſtible. That poetical power which can convey us "to Thebes, to "Athens, when it will, and where," has ſo forcibly repreſented the progreſs of theſe enormous rivers of the weſtern conti-

continent, that our imagination neceſſarily attends it, and beholds their vaſt deſarts, peopled plains, and happy iſlands. The true ſublime is exemplified in the idea of their ruſhing with ſuch impetuoſity, as to '*repel the tide*;' and the thought of '*ocean trembling for his green* '*domain*,' though amazingly bold, is one of that kind, in which the mind (prepared by what precedes for ſomewhat extraordinary) readily acquieſces. Thomſon's paragraphs often cloſe with lines peculiarly ſtrong and ſonorous, and we have a fine inſtance of it here.

And ocean trembles for his green domain.

Our poet's deſcription of a Summer's Noon, is very natural, and has great energy of expreſſion:

'Tis raging noon, and vertical, the ſun
Darts on the head direct his forceful rays.
O'er heav'n and earth, far as the ranging eye
Can ſweep, a *dazzling deluge* reigns, and all
From pole to pole † is undiſtinguiſh'd blaze.
In vain the ſight dejected to the ground
Stoops for relief, thence hot aſcending ſteams

† From pole to pole, ſtrictly ſpeaking, is improper; the poet meant from one part of the horizon to the other.

And

And keen reflection pain. Deep to the root
Of vegetation parch'd, the cleaving fields
And ſlippery lawn an arid hue diſcloſe,
Blaſt fancy's blooms, and wither e'en the ſoul.

In ſaying that as '*far as the eye can* '*range, there reigns a dazzling deluge,*' and that '*all from pole to pole is undiſ-* '*tinguiſh'd blaze,*' it muſt be allowed there is unneceſſary verboſity; but perhaps in this inſtance the redundancy, as tending to enforce the impreſſion of the image on the mind, is at leaſt pardonable. Exceſſive heat undoubtedly enfeebles the body, and has been ſuppoſed to enervate the mind; this was probably the circumſtance meant in this energetick, and almoſt bombaſtick line,

Blaſt fancy's blooms, and wither ev'n the ſoul.

Conſidered in connexion with the foregoing, the following is certainly an anticlimax, but it contains fine natural images. The mowers paſs their noon not

not only in eating and drinking, but often in ſleep alſo:

> Echo no more returns the chearful ſound
> Of ſharpening ſcythe: the mower ſinking, heaps
> O'er him the humid hay, with flowers perfum'd,
> And ſcarce a chirping graſshopper is heard
> Through the *dumb* mead.———

The context contains a bold proſopopoeia, and another thought, which, though indiſputably fanciful, contributes to the general purpoſe of fully poſſeſſing the imagination with the ſubject:

> ————Diſtreſsful nature pants,
> The very ſtreams look languid from afar;†
> Or through the unſhelter'd glade impatient ſeem
> To hurl into the covert of the grove.

The Poet deſcribes the impreſſions of heat on his own perſon with great feeling:

† A maſter of compoſition may ſometimes hazard ſuch daring ſtrokes, and ſucceed. Writers of inferior abilities attempting them, will only produce laughable abſurdity.

All-

All-conquering heat, O intermit thy wrath,
And on my throbbing temples, *potent thus*
Beam not ſo fierce! Inceſſant ſtill you *flow*,
And ſtill another fervent flood ſucceeds,
Pour'd on the head profuſe. In vain I ſigh
And reſtleſs turn, and look around for night;
Night is far off, and hotter hours approach.

Thomſon, who has here ſo fully expatiated on the hot weather of our own climate, has ſaid leſs of that between the tropicks. His introduction to the ſubject raiſes expectations, which his deſcription does not fully gratify. The porch, according to the vulgar adage, is bigger than the houſe.

Now while I taſte the ſweetneſs of the ſhade,
While *nature lies around deep lull'd in noon*;
Now come bold fancy ſpread a daring flight,
And ſing the wonders of the torrid zone;
Climes unrelenting! with whoſe rage compar'd,
Yon blaze is feeble, and yon ſkies are cool.

There is evidently in this a promiſe of ſomething ſuperior to the following:

See how at once the *bright effulgent* ſun,
Riſing direct, ſwift-chaſes from the ſky
The ſhort-liv'd twilight, and with ardent blaze
Looks *gaily fierce* o'er all the dazzling air:
He mounts his throne;* but kind before him ſheds,
Iſſuing from out the portals of the morn
The general breeze, to mitigate his fire,
And breathe refreſhment o'er a fainting world.

Armſtrong, in his excellent Didactick Poem,† has deſcribed tropical heat in a negative manner, by enumerating ſome of the circumſtances that render it ſupportable:

What ſuits the climate beſt, what ſuits the men
Nature profuſes moſt, and moſt the taſte
Demands. The fountain edg'd with racey wine,
Or acid fruits, bedews their thirſty ſouls;
The breeze eternal breathing round their limbs,
Supports in cloſe intolerable air:
While the cool palm, the plantain, *and the grove*

* Our author has here again confounded the mythological idea of Phœbus and his chariot with the actual ſun.

† Art of Preſerving Health.

That

That waves on gloomy Lebanon,† aſſwage
The torrid hill that beams upon their heads.

The fifth of the above lines, '*The breeze* '*eternal, &c.*' is one of the ſweeteſt, as the ſixth, '*Supports in cloſe,*' is one of the ſtrongeſt, and moſt ſonorous in our language.

John Philips, the celebrated imitator of Milton's ſtyle, a poetical, but bombaſtick writer, has deſcribed equinoctical ardors in another manner, viz. by their effects on the human frame.

Nor leſs the ſable borderer of Nile,
Nor who Trapobane manure, nor they
Whom ſunny Borneo bears, are ſtor'd with ſtreams
Egregious, rum and rice's ſpirit extract.
For here expos'd to perpendicular rays,

† This periphraſis has a bad effect. The mention of '*the grove that waves on Lebanon,*' inſtead of *cedar*, the name of the tree, makes one think at firſt ſight that the Poet, inſtead of deſcribing the Eaſt or Weſt-Indies, was deſcribing Mount Libanus, in Syria.

In

In vain they covet ſhades and Thraſcia's gales,
Pining with equinoctial heat, unleſs
The cordial glaſs perpetual motion keep
Quick circuiting; nor dare they cloſe their eyes
Void of a bulky charger near their lips,
With which in often-interrupted ſleep,
Their frying blood compels to irrigate
Their dry furr'd tongues elſe minutely to death
Obnoxious, diſmal death the effect of drought.†

But there are other circumſtances peculiar to theſe torrid regions, and Thomſon has abundantly ſucceeded in his pictures of them: among theſe, none is more highly coloured than the following:

——————————Breath'd hot
From all the boundleſs furnace of the ſky,
And the wide glittering waſte of burning ſand,
A ſuffocating wind the pilgrim ſmites

† Poets are ſuppoſed to have a licence for exaggeration, but PHILIPS had no occaſion for it here, if travellers can be believed, who aſſert, that in the iſle of Ormus, in the Perſian gulph, the inhabitants were obliged to paſs the night with the greater part of their bodies in ciſterns of water.

With inſtant death. Patient of thirſt and toil
Son of the deſart! ev'n the camel feels
Shot through his wither'd heart the fiery blaſt:
Or from the black-red ether burſting broad,
Sallies the ſudden whirlwind; ſtrait the ſands
Commov'd around in gathering eddies play;
Nearer and nearer ſtill they darkening come,
Till with the general all-involving ſtorm
Swept up, the whole continuous wilds ariſe,
And by their noon-day fount dejected thrown,
Or ſunk at night in ſad diſaſtrous ſleep,
Beneath deſcending hills, the caravan
Is buried deep. In Cairo's crouded ſtreets
The impatient merchant wond'ring waits in vain,
And Mecca ſaddens at the long delay.

This is poetry indeed! poetry ſuperior even to painting. The Poet tranſports inſtantaneouſly from the deſart to Cairo, and from Cairo to Mecca; but the painter could not have ſhewn all thoſe places on one canvas, without a flagrant abſurdity.

Poetical deſcriptions of tempeſts have in general ſuch uniformity, that the reader,

reader, e're he begins to read, knows what he ſhall meet with, and almoſt thinks peruſal unneceſſary. Thomſon's Thunder Storm however is of other character, it ſufficiently demonſtrates the uncommon accuracy of his obſervation. No author, ancient or modern, (ſo far as I know) has deſcribed the grand electrical phenonema of the atmoſphere, with ſuch dignity and preciſion. The diction, as uſual, is rather too diffuſe.

'Tis liſtening fear and dumb amazement all:
When to the ſtartled eye the ſudden glance
Appears far ſouth, eruptive through the cloud,
And following ſlower *in exploſion vaſt*,
The thunder raiſes his tremendous voice.
At firſt heard ſolemn o'er the verge of heaven,
The tempeſt *growls*; but as it nearer comes,
And rolls its awful burden on the wind,
The lightnings flaſh a larger curve, and more
The noiſe aſtounds; till over head a ſheet
Of livid flame diſcloſes wide, then ſhuts
And opens wider, ſhuts and opens ſtill
Expanſive, wrapping ether in a blaze,
Follows the looſen'd aggravated roar

Enlarging, deep'ning, mingling; peal on peal
Cruſh'd horrible, convulſing heaven and earth.

Storms ariſe from all quarters of the horizon, but perhaps oftenеſt from the ſouth; the mention of that point is therefore equally natural and pictureſque; ſpecification of poſition always gives a kind of reality to a ſuppoſed ſcene. The '*ſudden glance of diſtant* '*lightning*,' ſhould have been followed by the thunder heard remote, not by the '*tremendous voice*,' and vaſt exploſion; theſe are introduced too early in the deſcription. The tempeſt rolling its awful burden on the wind, is a juſt and noble idea. This part of the paſſage might poſſibly be compreſſed to advantage:

'Tis liſt'ning fear and dumb amazement all:
When to the ſtartled eye the ſudden glance,
Appears far ſouth eruptive through the cloud;
And following ſlow the ſolemn thunder rolls.
Long, dark and threatening o'er the verge of heav'n
The tempeſt ſwells, but as it nearer comes,

And

And ſpreads its awful burden on the wind,
The lightnings flaſh, &c.*

The '*ſhuts and opens, ſhuts and opens* '*ſtill,*' is obviouſly an attempt at making the ſound correſpond with the ſenſe, which notwithſtanding the verſes are rather proſaick, is not wholly unſucceſsful. The exploſions of a thunder cloud produce a diverſity of ſounds, which no language can fully imitate; the lines here employed in endeavouring at an imitation, have been thought to be noiſe without meaning. They may in part, but perhaps not wholly, deſerve that character.

Follows the looſen'd aggravated roar,
Enlarging, deep'ning, mingling; peal on peal,
Cruſh'd horrible, convulſing heav'n and earth.

Thunder ſometimes ſeems a kind of violent laceration, as if ſome elaſtick body were ſuddenly releaſed from confinement; this ſpecies of noiſe was per-

* The candid reader will obſerve that theſe alterations are given only to explain my meaning, when I talk of claſſical and correct compoſition.

haps meant to be expreſſed by the epithet '*looſened.*' Increaſed or augmented ſound, is not amiſs deſcribed by the harſh term '*aggravated;*' but after this it was certainly ſuperfluous to talk of '*enlarging.*' A new idea is conveyed by '*deepening;*' but nothing is added to the ſenſe by the word '*mingling.*' Repetition is very well indicated by the '*peal on peal;*' but what was intended by '*cruſh'd horrible,*' cannot be eaſily determined. It is no very extravagant hyperbole, to ſay of a violent commotion of the air, that it '*convulſed heaven and earth.*'

> Down comes a *deluge* of ſonorous hail,
> Or prone deſcending rain—wide rent the clouds,
> Pour a whole *flood*; and yet its flame unquench'd,
> The unconquerable lightning ſtruggles through,
> *Ragged* and fierce, or in red whirling balls,
> *And fires the mountains with redoubled rage.*

Here is obviouſly another attempt at imitative expreſſion, and with regard to ſound,

ſound, the paſſage is certainly unexceptionable, but it has in other reſpects ſomething to cenſure. '*Deluge*,' in the firſt line, and '*flood*,' in the third, are ſynonymous; the former gives an idea to which nothing is added by the latter. Poets, when intent on their ſubject, often unconſciouſly adopt the language of their predeceſſors, without conſidering how far the adoption is conſiſtent with propriety; Thomſon's line above quoted, '*And fires the mountains, &c.*' was probably taken from one of Pope, in this manner, for it does not ſeem to convey any preciſe natural image;

——————As when angry Jove
Hurls down the forky lightning from above;
On Arimè when he the thunder throws,
And fires Typhœus with redoubled blows.
ILIAD, B. 2. 290.

But to proceed,

Black from the ſtroke above the ſmouldering pine,
Stands a ſad ſhatter'd trunk, and ſtretch'd below,

A lifeleſs group the blaſted cattle lie;
There the ſoft flocks with that ſame harmleſs look
They were alive, and ruminating ſtill
In fancy's eye, and there the frowning bull
And ox half-rais'd.†———

This is a ſtriking picture, but its grandeur is diminiſhed by minuteneſs. The lines in italicks, however graphical, had better have been omitted.

———————Struck on the caſtled cliff
The venerable town and ſpiry fane
Reſign their *aged pride.*———

We have here another well ſelected and ſublime circumſtance. Zucarelli, a celebrated modern artiſt, in his painting of Macbeth and the witches, has greatly

† Arioſto, in one of his ſimilies, has introduced ſome of theſe images:

As when the thunder o'er the ether clears,
Slow-riſing from the ſtroke the hind appears,
Where ſtretch'd he lay, all ſenſeleſs on the plain,
Where faſt beſide him lay his oxen ſlain;
And ſees the pine that once had rais'd in air
Its ſtately branches, now of human care.—HOOLE

heightened

heightened the ſcene of horror, by repreſenting lightning falling on a diſtant caſtle.

> ———————The gloomy woods
> Start at the flaſh, and *from their deep receſs*
> *Wide-flaming out their trembling inmates ſhake.*

The thought of the woods ſtarting at the flaſh, has great poetical boldneſs. The context is almoſt unintelligible; one ſcarcely knows what to make of the '*wide-flaming out*,' and the '*trembling* '*inmates*.' Perhaps the author meant that the lightning fires the woods, and drives out the birds and beaſts that inhabit them.

> Amid *Carnarvon's* mountains rages loud
> The repercuſſive roar: with mighty craſh,
> Into the flaſhing deep, from the rude rocks
> Of *Penmanmaur* heap'd hideous to the ſky,
> Tumble the ſmitten cliffs; and *Snowdon's* peak
> Diſſolving, inſtant yields its wintry load:
> Far ſeen, the heights of heathy Cheviot blaze,
> And *Thule* bellows through her utmoſt iſles.

This is a moſt noble paſſage. Poetry here enables the imagination to comprize in one point of view, what could not poſſibly be comprized by the ſenſes. We ſee the rocks falling from the Cambrian mountains; we ſee the heights of Cheviot in flames; and we hear the thunder echoing through the remoteſt iſles of the ocean.

Our author's deſcriptive powers are equally conſpicuous, in his picture of the ſetting in of a froſt. The paſſage is graphical even to the greateſt minuteneſs, and is not juſtly chargeable with a profuſion of verboſity.

——————At eve
Steam'd eager from the red horizon around,
With the fierce rage of winter deep ſuffus'd,
An icy gale oft ſhifting o'er the pool,
Breathes a blue film, and in its mid career
Arreſts the bickering ſtream. The looſen'd ice
Let down the flood, and half diſſolv'd by day
Ruſtles no more, but to the ſidey bank
Faſt grown, or gathers round the pointed ſtone,
A chryſtal

A chryſtal pavement, *by the breath of heav'n*
Cemented firm; till ſeiz'd from ſhore to ſhore
The whole impriſon'd river *growls* below.
Loud rings the frozen earth, and hard reflects
A *double* noiſe; while, at his ev'ning watch
The village dog deters the nightly thief;
The heifer lows, the diſtant waterfall
Swells in the breeze; and with the haſty tread
Of traveller, the hollow-ſounding plain,
Shakes from afar.———

The ingenious author of the Elements of Criticiſm, under his head of intricate and involved figures that can ſcarcely be analyſed or reduced to plain language,† has adduced a part of the above deſcription, in example.

† To detect and explain nonſenſe, is no very eaſy taſk, it is like diſentangling a parcel of entangled thread or ſilk. Dr. YOUNG ſays,

Thought diſentangles paſſing o'er the lip,

But it much oftener entangles paſſing from the pen. A rich harveſt of theſe intricate and involved figures might be gathered from his works, and the works of his imitators. Yet he could condemn bombaſt in others.

———The

——————The diſtant waterfall
Swells in the breeze.——————

This cenſure however is not ſtrictly juſt; the paſſage has no confuſion of figures, but merely a very bold ellipſis. The ſenſe is too obvious to be miſtaken; the reader naturally ſupplies the word that is omitted. 'The *ſound* of the 'diſtant waterfall ſwells in, or rather '*comes upon* the breeze.'

Thomſon moſtly deſcribed what he had really ſeen, but from the deſcriptions of others, his imagination often formed very ſtriking and beautiful pictures. Such are his accounts of the vegetable productions of the Weſt-Indies, and of the ſuppoſed appearance of the internal parts of Abyſſinia:

Bear me Pomona to thy citron groves,
To where the lemon and the piercing lime,
With the deep orange glowing through the green,
Their lighter glories blend. Lay me reclin'd
Beneath the ſpreading tamarind that ſhakes,
Fann'd by the breeze, its fever-cooling fruit.

Deep

Deep in the *night* the maſſy locuſt ſheds;
Quench my hot limbs, or lead me through the maze,
Embow'ring endleſs of the Indian fig;
Or thrown at gayer eaſe on ſome fair brow;
Let me behold, by *breezy murmurs* † *cool'd*,
Broad o'er my head the verdant cedar wave,
And high palmetos lift their graceful ſhade.
O ſtretch'd amid theſe orchards of the ſun,
Give me to drain the cocoa's milky bowl,
And from the palm to draw its freſh'ning wine.

—But come my muſe, the deſart barrier burſt
A wild expanſe of lifeleſs ſand and ſky:
And ſwifter than the toiling caravan,
Shoot o'er the vale of Senar; ardent climb
The Nubian mountains, and the ſecret bounds
Of jealous Abyſſinia boldly pierce.——

—Thou like the harmleſs bee may'ſt freely range
From mead to mead bright with exalted flowers,
From jaſmine grove to grove mayſt wander gay
Through palmy ſhades and aromatic woods,
That grace the plains, inveſt the purpled hills,
And up the more than Alpine mountains wave.
There on the breezy ſummit, ſpreading fair
For many a league; or on ſtupendous rocks,

† This is a ſpecimen of what Lord KAIMS called Thomſon's falſe coin; a *breeze* might *cool*, but *murmurs* certainly could not.

That

That from the ſun-redoubling valley left
Cool to the middle air their lawny tops;
Where palaces, and fanes, and villas, riſe,
And gardens ſmile around, and cultur'd fields;
And fountains guſh; a world within itſelf
Diſdaining all aſſault.———

The impartial critick never experiences ſincerer pleaſure than when he meets with a paſſage ſublime, pathetic, and beautiful, and withal ſo correct, that he can allow it praiſe without abatement. Such a paſſage we may ſafely pronounce the following: the ſixth line, '*ſtill fondly forming, &c.*' is one of the fineſt inſtances of alliterative melody in the language.

Unhappy he! who from the firſt of joys,
Society, cut off, is left alone
Amid this world of death. Day after day
Sad on the jutting eminence he ſits,
And views the main that ever toils below,
Still fondly forming in the furtheſt verge,
Where the round ether mixes with the wave,
Ships dim-diſcovered dropping from the clouds:

At

At evening to the ſetting ſun he turns
A mournful eye, and down his dying heart
Sinks helpleſs; while the wonted roar is up
And hiſs continual through the tedious nigh

Nearly of the ſame character is deſcription of a man periſhing in ſnow. This is of conſiderable len and I have been liberal of quotatio it ſhall therefore ſuffice to quote concluſion:

In vain for him the officious wife prepares
The fire fair-blazing and the veſtment warı
In vain his little children peeping out
Into the mingling ſtorm demand their fire
With tears of artleſs innocence. Alas,
Nor wife nor children more ſhall he behold
Nor friends, nor ſacred home. On every r
The deadly winter ſeizes; *ſhuts up* ſenſe,
And o'er his inmoſt vitals *creeping cold*,
Lays him along the ſnows a ſtiffen'd corſ
Stretch'd out, and bleaching in the northern

Diſtreſs from accidents of this k muſt be not unfrequent in a mount ous and thinly-inhabited country, Scotland. Thomſon's imagination ſ

pecul

peculiarly impreſſed with it. Speaking of a perſon bewildered by an *Ignis Fatuus*, he ſays,

> ——————He ſinks abrupt,
> Rider and horſe amid the miry gulph:
> While ſtill from day to day, his pining wife
> And plaintive children his return await,
> In wild conjecture loſt.——

Our Author's deſcription of ſcenes of horror, derives great force from this introduction of human beings actually ſuffering amidſt them. The ſtory of Celadon and Amelia, and the three laſt quotations, are remarkable inſtances. Theſe illuſtrations however, though probable, are general and fictitious; but he is ſometimes happy enough to bring real facts in example; when he is deſcribing the violence of the cold in the polar regions, he mentions the circumſtance of Sir Hugh Willoughby, whoſe ſhip was frozen in, while he and all his company periſhed:

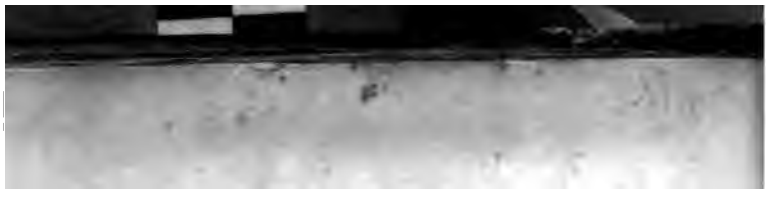
—Such

——Such was the Briton's fate,
As with firſt prow (what have not Britons dar'd)
He for the paſſage ſought, attempted ſince
So much in vain, and ſeeming to be ſhut
By jealous nature with eternal bars.
In theſe fell regions, in Arzina caught,
And to the ſtony deep his idle ſhip
Immediate ſeal'd, he with his hapleſs crew,
Each full exerted at his ſeveral taſk,
Froze into ſtatues, to the cordage glued
The ſailor, and the pilot to the helm. †

When he is deſcribing the diſeaſes of hot climates, he inſtances their fatality in the caſe of Admiral Vernon's fleet at Carthagena. This paſſage has been mentioned by Dr. Warton with juſt approbation.

——You gallant Vernon ſaw
The miſerable ſcene; you pitying ſaw
To infant weakneſs ſunk the warrior arm,
Saw the deep-racking pang, the ghaſtly form,
The lip pale-quivering, and the beamleſs eye

† There is perhaps a little poetical exaggeration here, the action of froſt could ſcarcely be ſo inſtantaneous.



No more with ardor bright; you heard the groans
Of agonizing ſhips,† from ſhore to ſhore,
Heard nightly plung'd amid the ſullen waves
The frequent corſe.——

Thomſon, in the courſe of the preceding ſtrictures, has been conſidered chiefly in his principal character of a deſcriptive poet; the delineatory part of his work affording the beſt ſpecimen of his peculiar manner. His poem however has other merit, for it abounds with noble ſtrokes of pathos, natural philoſophy, civil liberty, morality, and piety.

† A bold but poetical metonymy, or ſubſtitution of the thing containing, for the thing contained, of ſhips for ſailors.

FINIS.

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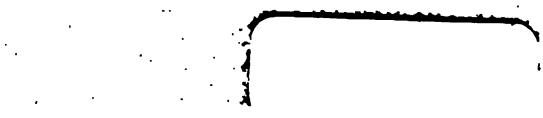
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